







# The Barren Fig-tree :

O R,

The Doom & Downfall  
of the *Fruitless Professor.*

Shewing, That the Day of Grace  
may be past with him long  
before his Life is ended.

The Signs also by which such mis-  
erable Mortals may be known.

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By JOHN BUNYAN.

*who being dead, yet speaketh, Heb. 11. 4.*

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*To which is added,*

*his Exhortation to Peace and  
Unity among all that fear God.*

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The Third Edition.

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London, Printed for J. Robinson, at the Golden Lion  
in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1692.



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TO THE  
READER.

Courteous Reader,

I Have written to thee now about  
the Barren Fig-tree, or how it  
will fare with the Fruitless Pro-  
fessor that standeth in the Vineyard  
of God.

Of what Complexion thou art, I  
cannot certainly divine, but the Pa-  
trible tells thee, that the Cumber-  
ground must be cut down.

A Cumber-ground Professor, is  
not only a provocation to God, a  
 stumbling-Block to the World, and a  
diminish to Religion, but a Snare to  
his own Soul also. Though his Excel-  
lency mount up to the Heavens, and  
his Head reach unto the Clouds, yet

A. 3. be

## To the Reader.

he shall perish for ever, like his dung, they that have seen him, shall say, Where is he? Job 20. 6.

Now they count it pleasure to live in the day-time, 2 Pet. 2. 13, 14. what will they do when the Angels fetch'd out?

The Tree whose Fruit withereth, is reckoned a Tree without Fruit, a Tree twice dead, one that must be plucked up by the Roots, Jude 12.

O thou Cumber-ground, God expects Fruit. God will come and fetch Fruit shortly.

My Exhortation therefore is to Professors, that they look to it, that they take heed.

The Barren Fig-tree in the Vineyard, and the Bramble in the Wood, are both prepared for the Fire.

Profession is not a Covert to hide from the Eye of God; nor will it palliate the revengeful Threatning of his Justice, he will command to cut it down shortly.

The

## To the Reader.

*The Church and a Profession are the best of places for the Upright, but the worst in the World for the Cumber-ground: He must be cast, a profane, out of the Mount of God; Cast, I say, over the Wall of the Vineyard, there to wither; thence to be gathered and burned. It had been better for them that they had not known the way of Righteousness, 2 Pet. 2. 21. And yet if they had not, they had been damned; but it is better to go to Hell without, than in, or from under a Profession: These shall receive greater Damnation, Luke 20. 47.*

*If thou be a Professor, read and tremble; If thou be Profane, do so likewise. For if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and Sinners appear? Cumber-ground, Take heed of the Ax; Barren Fig-tree, beware of the Fire.*

*But I will keep thee no longer out of the Book; Christ Jesus, the Dresser of*

## To the Reader.

of the Vineyard, take care of thee, dig about thee, and dung thee, that thou mayst bear Fruit: That when the Lord of the Vineyard cometh with his Ax to seek for Fruit, or pronounce the Sentence of Damnation on the Barren Fig-tree, thou mayst escape that judgment. The Cumber-ground must to the Wood-pile, and thence to the Fire.

Farewel.

Grace be with all them that love  
our Lord Jesus in Sincerity  
Amen.

J. Bunyan

The Barren Fig-tree :

O R,

The Doom and Downfal of  
the Fruitless Profeflor.

Luke 13. 6, 7, 8, 9.

A certain Man had a Fig-tree planted  
in his Vineyard, and he came and  
sought Fruit thereon, and found  
none. Then said he to the Dresser  
of his Vineyard, Behold, these three  
Years I come seeking Fruit on this  
Fig-tree, and find none: cut it  
down, why cumbereth it the ground?  
And he answering, said, Lord, let  
it alone this Year also, until I shall  
dig about it, and dung it: and if  
it bear Fruit, well: and if not,

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*then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

**A**T the beginning of this Chapter we read, how some of the *Jews* came to *Jesus Christ*, to tell him of the cruelty of *Pontius Pilate*, in mingling the Blood of the *Galileans* with their Sacrifices. An heathenish and prodigious Act: for therein he shewed, not only his Malice against the Jewish Nation, but also against their Worship, and consequently their God. An Action, I say, not only Heathenish, but prodigious also; for the Lord *Jesus* paraphrasing upon this Fact of his, teacheth the *Jews*, that without Repentance they should all Likewise perish. Likewise, that is, by the Hand and Rage of the *Roman Empire*: Neither should they be more able to avoid the Stroke, than were those eighteen upon whom the Tower of *Siloam* fell, and slew them, *Luke 19. 42, 43, 44.* The fulfilling of which Prophecy, for their hardness of Heart, and Impenitency, was in the days of *Titus* Son of *Vespasian*, about forty years after the Death of Christ. Then, I say, were these *Jews*, and their City both, environed round



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round on every side, wherein both they and it, to amazement, were miserably overthrown. God gave them Sword, and Famine, Pestilence and Blood, for their outrage against the Son of his Love: So *Wrath came on them to the uttermost*, 1 Thess. 2. 16.

Now to prevent their old and foolish *Salvo*, which they always had in readiness against such *Prophecies* and Denunciations of Judgment, the Lord Jesus presents them with this *Parable*, in which he *emphatically* shews them, that their cry of being the *Temple of the Lord*, and of their being the Children of *Abraham*, &c. and their being the Church of God, would not stand them in any stead. As who should say, It may be you think to help your selves against this my *Prophecy*, of your utter and unavoidable overthrow, by the Interest which you have in your outward Priviledges: But *all these will fail you*: For what think you? *A certain Man had a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came and sought Fruit thereon, and found none.* This is your Case, The Jewish Land is God's Vineyard, I know it; and I know also, that *you are the Fig-trees.* But behold, there wanteth

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wanteth the main thing, *Fruit*; for the sake, and in expectation of which, he set this Vineyard with Trees. Now, feeling the *Fruit* is not found amongst you; the *Fruit*, I say, for the sake of which he did at first plant this Vineyard; what remains, but that in Justice he command to cut you down, *as those that cumber the Ground*, that he may plant himself another Vineyard. Then said he to the Dresser of his Vineyard, Behold, these three Years I come seeking *Fruit* on this Fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground? This therefore must be your End, altho you are planted in the Garden of God, for the barrenness and unfruitfulness of your Hearts and Lives, you must be cut off, yea, rooted up, and cast out of the Vineyard.

In *Parables* there are two Things to be taken notice of, and to be enquired into of them that read.

First, The *Metaphors* made use of.

Secondly, The Doctrin, or *Mysteries* couched under such *Metaphors*.

The *Metaphors* in this *Parable* are;  
(1.) A certain Man. (2.) A Vineyard.  
(3.) A

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(3.) A Fig-tree, barren or fruitless.

(4.) A Dresser. (5.) Three Years.

(6.) Digging and Dunging, &c.

The *Doctrin*, or *Mystery*, couched under these words, is to shew us, *What is like to become of a fruitless or formal Professor*. For,

1. By the *Man* in the *Parable*, (Luke 15. 11.) is meant *God the Father*.

2. By the *Vineyard*, (Isa. 5. 7.) his *Church*.

3. By the *Fig-tree*, a *Professor*.

4. By the *Dresser*, the *Lord Jesus*.

5. By the *Fig-tree's* barrenness, the *Professor's* fruitlessness.

6. By the *three Years*, the *Patience of God*, that for a time he extendeth to barren Professors.

7. This calling to the *Dresser* of the *Vineyard* to cut it down, is to shew, the *Outcries of Justice against fruitless Professors*.

8. The *Dresser's* interceding, is to shew, how the *Lord Jesus* steps in, and takes hold of the *Head of his Father's Ax*, to stop, or at least to defer present execution on a barren *Fig-tree*.

9. The *Dresser's* desire to try to make the *Fig-tree* fruitful, is to shew you, How

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*How unwilling he is that ever a barren Fig-tree, should yet be barren, and perish.*

10. His digging about it, and dunging of it, is to shew his willingness to apply Gospel-helps to this barren Professor, if happily he may be fruitful.

11. The Supposition that the Fig-tree may yet continue fruitless, is to shew, that when Christ Jesus hath done all, *There are some Professors will abide barren and fruitless.*

12. The Determination upon this Supposition, at last to cut it down, is a certain prediction of such Professors unavoidable and eternal Damnation.

But to take this Parable into pieces, and to discourse more particularly, tho with all brevity, upon all the parts thereof.

*A certain Man had a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard.]*

The Man, I told you, is to present us with God the Father, by which Similitude He is often set out in the New Testament.

Observe then, That it is no new thing, if you find in God's Church  
barren

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*Barren Fig-trees*, fruitless Professors; even as here you see is a *Tree*, a fruitless *Tree* a fruitless *Fig-tree* in the Vineyard. Fruit is not so easily brought forth, as a Profession is got into; 'tis easie for a Man to cloath himself with a fair show in the flesh, to word it, and say, Be thou warmed and filled with the best. 'Tis no hard thing to do these with other things; but to be fruitful, to bring forth fruit to God, this doth not every *Tree*; No not every *Fig-tree*, that stands in the Vineyard of God. Them words also, *John 15.2.* [*Every branch in me that beareth not Fruit, he taketh away,*] assert the same thing. There are branches in Christ, in Christ's Body mystical, (which is his Church, his Vineyard) that bear not Fruit, wherefore the Hand of God is to take them away. *I looked for Grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,* *Isa. 5. 4.* that is, no Fruit at all that was acceptable with God. Again; *Hos. 10. 1.* *Israel is an empty Vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself, none to God; he is without Fruit to God.* All these, with many more, shew us the truth of the Observation, and that God's Church  
ma

may be cumbered with fruitless Fig-trees, with barren Professors.

*Had a [Fig-tree.]*

Although there be in God's Church that be barren and fruitless ; yet, as I said, *to see to*, they are like the rest of the Trees, even a *Fig-tree* : 'Twas not an *Oak*, nor a *Willow*, nor a *Thorn*, nor a *Bramble*, but a *Fig-tree*, Ezek. 33. 31. *They come before thee as the people cometh.* Isa. 58. 2, 3, 4. *They delight to know my ways, as a Nation that did Righteousness, and forsook not the Ordinances of their God: they ask of me the Ordinances of Justice, they take delight in approaching to God; and yet but barren, fruitless, and unprofitable Professors.* Judas also was one of the twelve, a *Disciple*, an *Apostle*, a *Preacher*, an *Officer*, yea, and such an one as none of the *Eleven* mistrusted, but preferred before themselves, each one crying out, *Is it I? Is it I?* Mar. 14. 19. none of them, as we read of, (Job. 6. 70.) mistrusting Judas, yet he in Christ's Eye was the *barren Fig-tree*, a *Devil*, a *fruitless Professor*. The foolish Virgins

Fig. Virgins also went forth of the World with the other, had Lamps, and Light, and were awakened with the other; yea, had boldness to go forth when the midnight Cry was made with the other; and thought that they could have looked Christ in the Face, when he sat upon the Throne of Judgment with the other; and yet but foolish, but barren Fig-trees, but fruitless Professors: *Mat. 7. 22, 23.* Many, saith Christ, will say unto me in that day, *this and that*, and will also talk of many wonderful Works; yet, behold, he finds nothing in them, but the Fruits of Unrighteousness: they were altogether barren and fruitless Professors.

*Had a Fig-tree [planted.]*

This word [*planted*] doth also reach far; it supposeth one taken out of its natural Soil, or removed from the place it grew in once; one that seemed to be called, awakened; and not only so, but by strong hand carried *from the World* to the Church; *from Nature*, to Grace; *from Sin*, to Godliness. *Psal. 80. 8. Thou broughtest a Vine out of Egypt; thou didst cast*

*cast out the Heathen and plant it.* Of some of the Branches of this Vine, were there unfruitful Professors.

It must be concluded therefore, That this Professor (that remaineth notwithstanding fruitless) is, as to the view and judgment of the Church, rightly brought in thither; to wit, by Confession of Faith, of Sin, and a shew of Repentance and Regeneration, (thus false Brethren creep in unawares.) All these things this word, *Planted*, intimateth; yea further, that the Church is satisfied with them, consents they should abide in the Garden, and counteth them sound as the rest. But before God, in the sight of God, they are graceless Professors, *barren and fruitless Fig-trees*.

Therefore it is one thing to be *IN* the Church, or in a Profession; and another to be *O F* the Church, and to belong to that Kingdom, that is prepared for the Saint, that is so indeed. Otherwise, *being planted*, shall it prosper, shall it not utterly wither, when the *East-wind* toucheth it? *It shall wither in the Furrows where it grew*, Ezek. 17. 10.



*Had a Fig-tree planted in [his] Vineyard.*

In [*his*] Vineyard. Hypocrites, with rotten Hearts, are not afraid to come before God in *Sion*. These words therefore suggest unto us, a prodigious kind of boldness and hardned Fearlesness: For what presumption higher, and what attempt more desperate, than for a Man that wanteth Grace, and the true Knowledge of God, to crowd himself (in that condition) into the House, or Church of God; or to make profession of, and desire that the name of God should be called upon by him?

For the Man that maketh a Profession of the Religion of Jesus Christ, that Man hath, as it were, *put the Name of God upon himself*, and is called and reckoned now, (how fruitless soever before God, or Men) the Man that hath to do with God, the Man that God owneth, and will stand for. This Man, I say, by his Profession suggesteth this to all that know him, to be such a Professor. Men meerly natural, I mean, Men that have not got the *devilish* art of Hypocrisie, are afraid

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afraid to think of doing thus. *And of the rest durst no Man joyn himself to them, but the people magnified them,* Acts 5. 13. And indeed it displeaseth God, *They have brought,* saith he, *Men uncircumcised into my Sanctuary.* And again, (Isa. 1. 12.) *When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my Courts? saith God.* They have therefore learnt this boldness of none in the visible World, they only took it of the Devil; for he, and he only (with these his Disciples) attempt to present themselves in the Church before God. *The Tares are the Children of the Wicked One;* the *Tares*, that is, the Hypocrites that are Satan's Brood, the Generation of Vipers, that cannot escape the Damnation of Hell.

[Had] a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard.

He doth not say, *He planted a Fig-tree*, but there *Was a Fig-tree there*, he *had*, or *found*, a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard.

The great God will not acknowledg the *barren Fig-tree*, or barren Professor,  
to

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to be *His* Workmanship, or a Tree of his bringing in; only the Text saith, He had one there. This is much like that in *Matthew*, Chap. 15. 13. *Every Plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* Here again are Plants in his Vineyard, which God will not acknowledg to be of his planting: and he seems to suggest, that in his Vineyard are many such—*Every Plant*, or all those Plants and Professors that are got into the Assembly of the Saints, or into the Profession of their Religion, without God and his Grace, *shall be rooted up.*

*And when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw there a Man that had not on a Wedding-garment; and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-garment? Matth. 22. 11, 12.* Here is one so cunning and crafty, that he beguiled all the Guests; he got and kept in the Church, even until the King himself came in to see the Guests. But his subtilty got him nothing; it did not blind the Eyes of the King; it did not pervert the Judgment of the Righteous. Friend, how camest thou in hither? did overtake him at last, even a publick

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publick rejection ; the King discovered him in the face of all there present. *How camest thou in hither ?* My Father did not bring thee hither, I did not bring thee hither, my Spirit did not bring thee hither, thou art not of the Heavenly Father's planting, *How camest thou in hither ?*

John 10. 1. *He that cometh not in by the Door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a Thief and a Robber.* This Text also is full, and plain to our purpose ; for *this Man came not in by the Door*, yet got into the Church, he got in by climbing ; he broke in at the Windows, he got something of the Light and Glory of the Gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ* in his Head ; and so (hardy Wretch that he was) he presumed to croud himself among the Children. But how is this resented ? What saith the King of him ? Why this is his Sign, *The same is a Thief and a Robber.* See ye here also, if all they be owned as the planting of God, that get into his Church, or Profession of his Name.

*Had a Fig-tree, had one without a Wedding-garment, had a Thief in his Garden, at his Wedding, in his House.*  
These

These climbed up some other way. There are *many* ways to get into the Church of God, and Profession of his Name beside, and without an entring by the Door.

1. There is the way of *lying* and *dissembling*, and at *this* gap the *Gibeonites* got in; *Josh. 9. 3, 4. &c.*

2. There is sometimes falseness amongst some Pastors, either for the sake of carnal Relations, or the like; at *this* hole *Tobiah* the Enemy of God got in, *Neh. 13. 4, 5, 6.*

3. There is sometimes *negligence*, and too much uncircumspectness in the whole Church, thus the Uncircumcised got in; *Ezek. 44. 7, 9.*

4. Sometimes again, let the Church be *never so circumspect*, yet *these* have so much help from the Devil, that *they* be-  
gale them all, and so get in. These are of that sort of Thieves that Paul complains of; *false Brethren brought in un-  
awares, Gal. 2. 3, 4. Jude also cries out of these, Certain Men crept in unawares, Jude 4. Crept in! What, were they so lowly! A voluntary humility, (Col. 2. 23.) a neglecting of the Body, not any humor. Oh, how seemingly self-denying*

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denying are some of these creeping things, that yet are to be held, (as we shall know them) an abomination to Israel, Lev. 11. 43, 44.

*But in a great House, there are not only Vessels of Gold, and of Silver, but also of Wood, and of Earth; and some to Honour, and some to Dishonour; 2 Tim. 2. 20. By these words the Apostle seems to take for granted, that as there hath been, so there still will be, these kind of Fig-trees, these barren Professors in the House, where all Men have done what they can; Even as in a great House there are always Vessels to Dishonour, as well as those to Honour and Glory; Vessels of Wood, and of Earth, as well as of Silver and Gold. So then there must be wooden Professors in the Garden of God, there must be earthy, earthen Professors in his Vineyard; but that methinks is the biting word, and some to Dishonour. That to the Romans is dreadful, (Rom. 9. 21, 22.) but this seems to go beyond it; That speaks but of the Reprobate in general, but this of such and such in particular. That speaks of their hardning but in the common way; But this, that they must be suffered to creep in the Church; They*

to fit themselves for their place, their  
own place, *Acts* 1. 25. the place prepa-  
red for them of *this* sort only. As the  
Lord Jesus said once of the *Pharisees*,  
*These shall receive greater damnation*, *Luke*  
10. 47.

*Barren Fig-tree*, fruitless Professor,  
Hast thou heard all these things? Hast  
thou considered that this *Fig-tree* is not  
acknowledged of God to be his, but is  
denied to be of his planting, and of his  
bringing unto his Wedding? Dost not  
thou see that thou art called a *Thief*, and  
a *Robber*, that hast either *climbed* up to,  
or *crept* in at another place than the  
Door? Dost thou not hear, that there  
will be in God's House, *wooden* and  
*earthen* Professors, and that no place will  
serve to fit those for Hell, but the  
House, *Church*, the Vineyard of God!  
*Barren Fig-tree*! fruitless Christian! do  
not thine Ears tingle?

*And [ He ] came and sought Fruit  
thereon.*

When a Man hath got a Profession,  
and is crouded into the Church and  
House of God; the Question is not *now*,

B

Hath

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Hath he Life, hath he right Principles *but hath he Fruit?* He came seeking Fruit thereon. It matters not who brought thee in hither, whether God or the Devil, or thine own vain-glorious Heart. *But hast thou Fruit?* dost thou bring forth Fruit unto God? And, let every one that nameth the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, depart from Iniquity, 2 Tim. 2. 19. He doth not say, and let every one that hath Grace, or let those that have the Spirit of God; but let every one that nameth the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, depart from Iniquity.

What do Men meddle with Religion for? Why do they call themselves by the Name of the Lord Jesus, if they have not the Grace of God, if they have not the Spirit of Christ? *God therefore expecteth Fruit:* What do they do in the Vineyard? Let them work, or get them out, the Vineyard must have Labourers in it: Son, go work to day in my Vineyard, Mat. 21. 28. Wherefore, want of Grace, and want of Spirit, will not keep God from seeking Fruit: *And He came and sought Fruit thereon,* Luke 8. 8. He requireth that which He seemeth to have: Every Man in the Vineyard, and



## The Barren Fig-tree. 19

House of God, promiseth himself, professeth to others, and would have all Men take it for granted, that an Heavenly Principle is in him; Why then should not God seek Fruit?

As for them therefore that will retain the Name of Christians, fearing God, and yet make no Conscience of bringing forth Fruit to him: He saith to such, *Woe!* As for you, Go ye, serve every one his Idols; and hereafter also, if ye will hearken to me, &c. Ezek. 20. 39. Barren Fig-tree, dost thou hear? God expecteth Fruit, God calls for Fruit; yea, God will shortly come seeking Fruit on this Barren Fig-tree. Barren Fig-tree! either bear Fruit, or go out of the Vineyard, (and yet then thy Case will be un-  
speakably damnable.) Yea, let me add, thou shalt neither bear Fruit, nor depart, God will take his Name out of thy Mouth, Jer. 44. 26. He will have Fruit, and I say farther, If thou wilt do neither, yet God in Justice and Righteousness will still come for Fruit. And it will be in vain for thee to count this thy Piety; He will reap where he hath sowed, and gather where he hath not

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*strewed, Matth. 25. 24, 25, 26. Barren Fig-tree, dost thou hear?*

*Q. What if a Man hath no Grace?*

*A. Yes, seeing he hath a Profession*

*And he came and sought Fruit [thereon.]*

A Church then, and a Profession, are not places where the workers of Iniquity may hide themselves, and Sins, from God. Some of old thought, that because they could cry, *The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord*, that therefore they were delivered, or had a Dispensation to do the Abominations which they committed; as some in our days. For, who (say they) have a right to the Creatures if not Christians, if not Professors, if not Church-Members? And from this Conclusion, let go the Reigns of their inordinate Affections after Pride, Ambition, Gluttony, pampering themselves without fear, Jude daubing themselves with the Lust-provoking Fashions of the Times; to walk with stretched-out necks, naked Breasts, frizled

## The Barren Fig-tree. 21

frizled Fore-top, wanton Gestures, in  
gorgeous Apparel, mix'd with Gold and  
Pearl, and costly Array. I will not here  
make inspection into their Lives, their  
Carriages at home, in their Corners,  
and secret Holes; But certainly Persons  
thus spirited, thus principled, and thus  
inclined, have but empty Boughs, Boughs  
that want the Fruit that God expects,  
and that God will come down to seek.

*Barren Fig-tree*, thou art not licensed  
by thy Profession, nor by the Lord of  
the Vineyard, to bear *these* Clusters of  
*Gomorrah*: neither shall the *Vineyard*,  
nor thy being *crowded* among the *Trees*  
*there*, shelter thee from the sight of the  
Eye of God. Many make Religion their  
cloak, and Christ their *Stalking-horse*,  
and by that means cover themselves, and  
hide their own wickedness from Men:  
But God *seeth their Hearts*, hath his print  
upon the heels of their Feet, and pon-  
dereth all their goings: and at last, when  
their iniquity is found to be hateful,  
he will either smite them with hardness  
of Heart, and so leave them, or awa-  
ken them to bring forth Fruit. Fruit he  
looks for, seeks and expects, *barren Fig-*  
*Tree!*

But what! Come into the Presence of God to sin? What, Come into the Presence of God to *hide thy Sin*? Alas Man! The Church is God's Garden, and Christ Jesus is the great Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession. What! come into the House that is called by my Name! into the place where mine Honour dwelleth! *Psal. 26. 8.* where mine Eyes and Heart are continually! *1 King. 9. 3.* What, come there to sin, to hide thy sin, to cloak thy sin! His *Plants* are an *Orchard with pleasant Fruit*, *Song 4. 13, 14, 15.* And every time he goeth into his Garden, it is to see the Fruits of the Valley; and to see if the Vine flourish, and if the Pomegranates Bud.

Yea, saith he, *He came seeking Fruit in This Fig-tree.* The Church is the place of God's Delight; where he ever desires to be, there he is night and day. He is there to seek for Fruit, to seek for Fruit of all, and every Tree in the Garden. Wherefore assure thy self, O fruitless one, that thy ways must needs be open before the Eyes of the Lord. *One black Sheep* is soon espied, although in company with many; *that* is taken with the first cast of the eye; its different colour  
still

still betrays it. I say, therefore, a Church and a Profession are not places where the workers of Iniquity may hide themselves from God, that seeks for Fruit; My Vineyard, saith God, which is mine, is before me, Song. 8. 12.

And he came and sought Fruit thereon [and found none.]

Barren Fig-tree, hearken; The continual non-bearing of Fruit, is a dreadful sign, that thou art to come to a dreadful End, as the winding up of this Parable concludeth.

And found none.] None at all, or none to God's liking: For when he saith, He came seeking Fruit thereon, he means Fruit meet for God, (Heb. 6. ) pleasant Fruit, Fruit good and sweet.

Alas, it is not any Fruit will serve; bad Fruit is counted none. Every Tree that bringeth not forth Good Fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the Fire, Matth. 3. 10.

1. There is a Fruit among Professors that withers, and so never comes to be ripe, a Fruit that is smitten in the growth, and comes not to maturity, and this is

reckoned *no Fruit*. This Fruit those Professors bear, that have *many* fair beginnings, or blossoms: That make *many* fair offers of Repentance and Amendment; that begin to pray, to resolve, and to break off their Sins by Righteousness; but stop at those beginnings, and bring *no Fruit* forth to perfection. This Man's Fruit is withered, wrinkled, smitten Fruit, and is in effect *no Fruit at all*.

2. There is an *hasty* Fruit, such as is the *Corn upon the House-top*, Psal. 129, or that which springs up on the *Dung-hil*, that runs up *suddenly*, violently, with *great stalks*, and big *shew*, and yet at last proves *empty* of Kernel. This Fruit is to be found in those Professors, that on a sudden are so awakened, so convinced, and so affected with their Condition, that they shake the whole Family, the End-ship, the whole Town. For a while they cry hastily, vehemently, dolefully, mournfully, and yet all is but a Pang, an Agony, a Fit, they bring not forth Fruit with Patience. These are called those *hasty* Fruits, *that shall be as a fading flower*, Isa. 28. 4.

3. There

3. There is a Fruit that is *vile, and ill-tasted*, Jer. 24. how long soever it be in growing; the root is dried, and cannot convey a sufficiency of Sap to the Branches to ripen the Fruit. These are the Fruit of such Professors, whose Heart is estranged from Communion with the Holy Ghost, whose Fruit groweth from *themselves*, from their Parts, Gifts, Strength of Wit, natural or moral Principles. These, notwithstanding they bring forth Fruit, are called *empty Vines*; such as bring not forth Fruit to God.

*Their Root is dried up, they shall bear no Fruit; yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved Fruit of their Womb*, Hos. 9. 16.

4. There is a Fruit that is *Wild*; I looked for Grapes, and it brought forth Wild Grapes, Isa. 5. 4. I observe, That as there are Trees and Herbs that are wholly right, and noble, fit indeed for the Vineyard: So there are also their Semblance, but *wild*; not right, but ignoble. There is the Grape, and the wild Grape; the Vine, and the wild Vine; the Rose, and *canker-Rose*; Flowers, and *wild-Flowers*; the Apple, and the *wild-Apple*, which we call the Crab. Now Fruit

## 26 The Barren Fig-tree.

from these *wild* things, however they may please the *Children* to play with, yet the *Prudent* and *Grave* count them of little or no value. There are also in the World a Generation of Professors, that notwithstanding their Profession, are wild by Nature; yea, such as were never cut out, or off, from the *wild Olive-tree*, nor never yet planted into the good *Olive-tree*. Now these can bring nothing forth but *wild Olive-berries*, they cannot bring forth Fruit unto God. Such are all those that have lightly taken up a Profession, and crept into the Vineyard without a new birth, and the blessing of Regeneration.

5. There is also untimely Fruit; *Even as a Fig-tree casteth her untimely Figs*, *Rev. 6. 13.* Fruit out of Season, and so not Fruit to God's liking.

There are two sorts of Professors subject to bring forth untimely Fruit.

First, They that bring forth [Fruit] too soon.

Secondly, They that bring forth [Fruit] too late.



First, They that bring forth too soon. They are such as at present receive the Word with Joy; and anon, before they have Root downwards, they thrust forth upwards; but having not root, when the Sun ariseth they are smitten, and miserably die without Fruit. These Professors are those light and inconsiderate ones, that think nothing but Peace will extend the Gospel; and so anon rejoyce at the Tidings, without foreseeing the Evil: Wherefore when the Evil comes, being unarmed, and so not able to stand any longer, they die, and are withered, and bring forth no Fruit. He that received the Seed into stony places, the same is he that beareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by they are offended, Mat. 13. 20, 21. There is in Isa. 28. mention made of some, Whose glorious Beauty shall be as fading Flower, Isa. 28. 4. because it is Barrit before Summer. Both these are untimely Fruit.

Secondly, They also bring forth untimely Fruit, that stay till the Season is over: God will have his Fruit in His Season;

## 28 The Barren Fig-tree.

Season ; I say, he will receive them of such Men as shall render them to him in *Their Seasons*, *Matth. 21. 41.* The missing of the *season* is dangerous, staying till the Door is shut is dangerous, *Mat. 24. 10, 11.* Many there be that come not till the Flood of God's Anger is raised, and too deep for them to wade through, *Surely in the Floods of great Waters, they shall not come nigh unto him, Psal. 32. 6.* Esau's [ *afterward* ] is fearful : For ye know how that *afterward* when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears, *Heb. 12. 16, 17.*

So the Children of *Israel*, they brought to God the Fruits of Obedience too late, their *Lo, we be here*, (*Numb. 14. 40, 41, 42.*) came too late ; Their, *We will go up* (*vers. 21, 22, 23.*) came too late ; The Lord had sworn, *Mat. 23. 10. & 27. 3.* before, that they should not possess the Land. All these are such as bring forth *untimely Fruit*, *Heb. 12. 17. Luk. 13. 25, 26, 27.* It is the hard hap of the Reprobate to do all things too late ; to be sensible of his want of Grace too late ; to be sorry for sin too late ; to seek Repen-

Repentance too late ; to ask for mercy,  
and to desire to go to Glory too late.

1. Thus you see that Fruit *smitten* in  
the growth, that *withereth*, and that  
comes not to maturity, is *no Fruit*.

2. That *hasty* Fruit, such as the Corn  
upon the House top, Psal. 129.6. *withereth*  
also afore it groweth up, and is *no Fruit*.

3. That the Fruit that is *vile* and ill  
tasted, is *no Fruit*.

4. That *wild* Fruit, *wild* Grapes, Rev.  
6. are *no Fruit*.

5. That *untimely* Fruit, such as comes  
too soon, or that comes too late ; such as  
come not in *their Season*, are *no Fruit*.

And he came and sought Fruit thereon,  
and found none.

Nothing will do but Fruit : Mat. 21.

34. He looked for Grapes ; when the time  
of Fruit drew near, he sent his Servants to  
the Husbandmen, that they might receive the  
Fruit of it.

Quest. But what Fruit doth God ex-  
pect ?

A. Good Fruit. Every tree that bringeth  
not forth good fruit, is hewn down, Mat. 7.19.

Now before the Fruit can be good, the  
Tree

## 20 The Barren fig tree.

Tree must be good, for good Fruit makes not a good Tree, *but a good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit; Do Men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles?* A Man must be good, else he can bring forth no good Fruit; he must have righteousness imputed, that he may stand good in God's sight from the curse of his Law. He must have a Principle of Righteousness in his Soul, else how should he bring forth good Fruits? and hence it is, that a Christians fruits are called, *Gal. 5. 22, 23. The fruits of the Spirit, the fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, Phil. 1. 11.* The Fruits of the Spirit; therefore the Spirit must be there: the Fruits of righteousness, therefore righteousness must *first* be there; but to particularize in a few things briefly.

*First,* God expecteth Fruit that will answer, and be worthy of the Repentance, which thou feignest thy self to have. Every one in a Profession, and that hath crouded into the Vineyard pretendeth to Repentance; now, of every such Soul God expecteth that the *Fruit* of Repentance be found to attend them, *Mat. 3. 8. Bring forth Fruits therefore meet for Repentance; or answerable to thy*

## The Barren Fig-tree. 31

thy profession of the Doctrine of Repentance. *Barren Fig-tree*, seeing thou art a Professor, and art got into the Vineyard : thou standest before the Lord of the Vineyard, as one of the Trees of the Garden : Wherefore He looketh for *Fruit* from thee, as from the rest of the Trees in the Vineyard ; *Fruits*, I say, and such as may declare thee in Heart and Life, one that hath made sound Profession of Repentance. By thy Profession thou hast said, *I am sensible of the Evil of Sin* : Now then, live such a Life, as declares that thou art sensible of the Evil of Sin. By thy Profession thou hast said, *I am sorry for my Sin* : Why then, live such a Life as may declare *This Sorrow*. By thy Profession thou hast said, *I am ashamed of my Sin*, Psal. 38. 18. yea, but live such a Life, that Men by that may see thy *shame for sin*, Jer. 31. 19. By thy Profession thou sayest, *I have turned from, left off, and am become an enemy to every appearance of evil*, 1 Thess. 5. 22. Ah ! but doth thy Life and Conversation declare thee to be such an one ? Take heed, *barren Fig-tree*, lest thy Life should give thy Profession the lie. I say again, Take heed, for

## 32 The Barren Fig tree.

for God himself will come for Fruit;  
*And he sought fruit, thereon.*

You have some Professors, that are only Saints before Men, *when they are abroad*; but are Devils and Vipers at home; Saints by Profession, but Devils by Practice; Saints in Word, but Sinners in Heart and Life. These Men may have the Profession, but they want the Fruit: *that become Repentance.*

*Barren Fig-tree!* Can it be imagined that those that *paint* themselves, did ever repent of their *Pride*? or that those that *pursue* this World, did ever repent of their *Covetousness*? or that those that walk with *wanton Eyes*, did ever repent of their *fleshly Lusts*? Where, *barren Fig-tree*, is the Fruit of these Peoples Repentance? Nay, do they not rather declare to the World, *that they have repented of their Profession*? Their Fruits look as if they had. Their *Pride* saith, they have repented of their *Humility*: Their *Covetousness* declareth, that they are weary of *depending upon God*; and doth not thy *wanton* actions declare, that thou *abhorrest Chastity*? Where is thy Fruit, *Barren Fig-tree*? Repentance is not only a sorrow, and a shame for, but *a turning from Sin*

## The barren fig-tree. 33

*Sin to God, Heb. 6. it is called Repentance from dead works. Hast thou that Godly Sorrow that worketh Repentance to Salvation, never to be repented of? 2 Cor. 7. 10, 11. How dost thou shew thy carefulness, and clearing of thy self; thy indignation against Sin; thy fear of offending; thy vehement desire to walk with God; thy zeal for his Name, and Glory in the World: and what revenge hast thou in thy Heart against every thought of Disobedience?*

But where is the Fruit of this Repentance? Where is thy Watching, thy Fasting, thy Praying against the remainders of Corruption? Where is thy Self-abhorrence; thy blushing before God, for the Sin that is yet behind? Where is thy tenderness of the Name of God and his Ways? Where is thy Self-denial and Contentment? How dost thou shew before Men the truth of thy turning to God? Hast thou renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness? 2 Cor. 4. 2. Canst thou commend thy self to every Man's Conscience in the sight of God?

*And*

*And he sought Fruit thereon.]*

Secondly, God expecteth Fruits that shall answer that Faith which thou makest Profession of. The Professor that is got into the Vineyard of God, doth feign that he hath the Faith, the Faith most holy, the Faith of God's Elect. Ah! But where are thy Fruits, Barren Fig-tree? The Faith of the Romans was spoken of throughout the whole World, Rom. 1. 8. and the Thessalonians Faith grew exceedingly, 2 Thess. 1. 3.

Thou professest to believe thou hast a share in another World; Hast thou let go this, barren Fig-tree? Thou professest thou believest in Christ; is he thy Joy, and the Life of thy Soul? Yea, what conformity unto Him, or his Sorrows and Suffering? What resemblance hath his Crying, and Groaning, and Bleeding, and Dying wrought in thee? dost thou bear about in thy body the dying of the Lord Jesus? and is also the Life of Jesus made manifest in thy mortal body? 2 Cor. 4. 10, 11. Barren Fig-tree, Shew me thy Faith by thy Works. Shew out of a good Conversation thy Works with meekness of wisdom, Jam. 2. 18. & 3. 13.

What



## The Barren Fig-tree. 35

What *Fruit*, barren Fig-tree, what degree of *Heart-Holiness*? for *Faith purifies the Heart*, Act. 15. 9. What love to the Lord Jesus? for *Faith worketh by Love*, Gal. 5. 6.

*Thirdly*, God expecteth Fruits, according to the *Seasons of Grace* thou art under, according to the rain that cometh upon thee. Perhaps thou art planted in a good Soil, by great Waters, that thou mightest bring forth Branches, and bear Fruit; that thou mightest be a goodly Vine or Fig-tree: Shall he not therefore seek for Fruit, for Fruit answerable to the means? Barren Fig-tree, God expects it, and will find it too, if ever He bless thee. For the Earth which drinketh in the rain that comes oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned, Heb. 6. 7, 8.

*Barren Soul!* How many showers of Grace, how many dews from Heaven, how many times have the silver Streams of the City of God, run gliding by thy roots, to cause thee to bring forth Fruits! These Showers and Streams, and the Drops

## 36 The Barren Fig-tree.

Drops that hang upon thy Boughs, will all be accounted for; and will they not testifie against thee, that thou oughtest of right to be burned? Hear, and tremble, *O thou barren Professor! Fruits that become thy profession of the Gospel, the God of Heaven expecteth.* The Gospel hath in it the Forgiveness of Sins, the Kingdom of Heaven, and eternal Life: But what Fruit hath thy Profession of a belief of these things put forth in thy Heart and Life? Hast thou given thyself to the Lord; and is all that thou hast to be ventured for his Name in this World? Dost thou walk like one that is bought with a price, *Even the price of precious Blood?*

*Fourthly,* The Fruit that God expecteth is such, *As is meet for himself,* Fruit that may glorifie God; God's Trees are *Trees of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified; Fruit that tasteth of Heaven, abundance of such Fruit: For herein, saith Christ, is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much Fruit, John 15. 8.* Fruits of all kinds, new and old; the Fruits of the Spirit is in all Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth. *Fruits before the World, Fruits before the*

the Saints, *Fruits* before God, *Fruits* before Angels.

O, my Brethren, *What manner of Persons* ought we to be, who have subscribed to the Lord, and have called our selves by the name of *Israel*? One shall say, *I am the Lord's*; and another shall call himself by the Name of *Jacob*; and another shall subscribe with his Hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the Name of *Israel*, *Isa. 44. 5.* Barren Fig-tree, hast thou subscribed, hast thou called thy self by the Name of *Jacob*? and surnamed thy self by the Name of *Israel*? All this thou pretendest to, who art got into the Vineyard, who art placed among the Trees of the Garden of God: God doth therefore look for such Fruit as is worthy of his Name, as is meet for Him; as the Apostle saith, *We should walk worthy of God*; that is, so as we may shew in every place, that the presence of God is with us, his Fear in us, and his Majesty and Authority upon our *Actions*. Fruits meet for him, *such* a dependance upon him, *such* trust in his Word, *such* satisfaction in his Presence, *such* a trusting of him with all my Concerns, and *such* delight in the enjoyment of him, *that may*  
demon-

## 38 The Barren Fig-tree.

*demonstrate that his Fear is in my Heart,* that my Soul is wrap'd up in his Things, and that my Body, and Soul, and Estate, and All, are in Truth, through his Grace, at his dispose, *Fruit meet for him.* Hearty thanks, and blessing God for Jesus Christ, for his good Word, for his Free-Grace, for the discovery of himself in Christ to the Soul, secret longing after another World, *Fruit meet for him.* Liberality to the poor Saints, to the poor World; a Life, in Word and Deed exemplary; a patient and quiet enduring of all things, till I have done and suffered the whole Will of God, which he hath appointed for me. *That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with patience,* Luke 8. 15. This is bringing forth Fruit unto God; *Having our Fruit unto Holiness, and our End everlasting Life,* Rom. 7. 4. & 6. 22. & 14. 8.

*Fifthly,* The Lord expects Fruit becoming the Vineyard of God. The Vineyard, saith he, *Isa. 5. 1. is a very fruitful Hill;* witness the Fruit brought forth in all Ages: The most barren Trees that ever grew in the Wood of this World, when

when planted in this Vineyard by the God of Heaven, what Fruit to Godward have they brought forth? Abel offered the more excellent Sacrifice, Heb. 11. 4. Enoch walked with God three hundred years, vers. 5. Noah, by his Life of Faith, condemned the World, and became Heir of the Righteousness which is by Faith, vers. 7. Abraham left his Country, and went out after God, not knowing whether he went, vers. 8. Moses left a Kingdom, and ran the hazard of the Wrath of the King, for the love he had to God and Christ. What shall I say of them who had Trials, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection? Heb. 11. 35, 36, 37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder; were tempted, were slain with the Sword: They wandered about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Peter left his Father, Ship and Nets, Mat. 4. 18, 19. Paul turned off from the Feet of Gamaliel. Men brought their Goods and Possessions (the price of them) and cast it down at the Apostle's Feet, Acts 19. 18, 19, 20. and others brought their Books together, and burnt them, curious Books, though they were worth fifty thousand

*and* pieces of Silver. I could add, how many willingly offered themselves in all Ages, and their *all*, for the worthy Name of the Lord Jesus, to be rack'd, starved, hanged, burned, drowned, pulled in pieces, and a thousand Calamities. Barren Fig-tree, the Vineyard of God hath been a fruitful place, What dost thou there? What dost thou bear? God expects Fruit, according to, or becoming the Soil of the Vineyard.

*Sixthly*, The Fruit which God expecteth is such as becometh God's Husbandry and Labour. The Vineyard is God's Husbandry, or Tillage. *I am the Vine*, saith Christ, *John 15, 1. and my Father is the Husbandman*. And again, *1 Cor. 3. 9. Ye are God's Husbandry, ye are God's Building*. The Vineyard, God fences it, God gathereth out the Stones, God builds the Tower, and the Winepress in the midst thereof. Here is Labour, here is Protection, here is removing of Hindrances, here is convenient Purgation, and *all, that there might be Fruit*.

*Barren Fig-tree*, what Fruit hast thou? hast thou Fruit becoming the Care of God, the Protection of God, the Wisdom

## The Barren Fig-tree.

41

of God, the Patience and Husbandry of God? It is the Fruit of the Vineyard, that is either the shame or the praise of the Husbandman. *I went by the Field of the slothful, saith Solomon, and by the Vineyard of the Man void of Understanding; and lo, it was grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the face thereof,* Prov. 24. 30, 31, 32.

*Barren Fig-tree,* If Men should make a judgment of the care, and pains, and labour of God in his Church by the Fruit that thou bringest forth, what might they say, is he not slothful, is he not careless, is he not without discretion! O thy Thorns, thy Nettles, thy barren Heart, and barren Life, is a continual provocation to the eyes of his Glory, is likewise a dishonour to the glory of his Grace.

*Barren Fig-tree,* hast thou heard all these things, I will add yet one more.

*And he came and sought Fruit thereon.]*

The Question is not now, What thou thinkest of thy self, nor what all the people of God think of thee? but what thou shalt be found in that day, when

C

God

God shall search thy boughs for Fruit. When *Sodom* was to be searched for righteous Men, God would not, in that matter, trust his faithful Servant *Abraham*, but still as *Abraham* interceded, God answered, *If I find fifty, or forty and five there, I will not destroy the City* Gen. 18. 20, 21, 26, 27. Barren Fig-tree what sayest thou? God will come down to see, God will make search for Fruit himself.

*And he came and sought Fruit there, and found [none.] Then said he to the Dresser of the Vineyard, Behold, these three Years I come seeking fruit on this Fig-tree, and find none; Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

These words are the effect of God's search into the boughs of a barren Fig-tree; He sought Fruit, and found none, none to his liking, none pleasant and good. Therefore, first, he complains of the want thereof to the Dresser, calls him to come and see, and take notice of the Tree; then signifieth his pleasure, he will have it removed, taken away, cut down from cumbering the Ground.



## The Barren Fig-tree. 43

*Observ.* The barren Fig-tree is the Object of God's displeasure, God cannot bear with a fruitless Professor.

[Then] said he, &c.

Then, after this provocation; then, after he had sought and found no Fruit, then. This word [then] doth shew us a kind of an inward disquietness: as he saith also in another place, upon a like provocation, *Then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his Name from under Heaven, Deut. 29. 18, 19, 20.*

Then; It intimateth that he was now come to a point, to a resolution what to do with this Fig-tree. Then said he to the Dresser of this Vineyard, that is, to Jesus Christ, *Behold*; as much as to say, come hither, here is a Fig-tree in my Vineyard, here is a Professor in my Church, that is barren, that beareth no Fruit.

*Observe,* However the barren Professor thinks of himself on Earth, the Lord cries out in Heaven against him, *Isa. 5. 5.*

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*And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and I will break down the Wall thereof, and it shall be troden down.*

*Behold, these three Years I come seeking Fruit, &c.*

*Observ. These three years.* God cries out that his patience is abused, that his forbearance is abused: Behold, these three years I have waited, forborn; these three years I have deferred mine anger; Therefore I will stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary and repenting, Jer. 15. 6.

*These three years.* Observe, God layeth up all the time; I say, a remembrance of all the time, that a barren Fig-tree, or fruitless Professor mispendeth in this world. As he saith also of Israel of old, Forty years long was I grieved with this Generation, Psal. 95. 10.

*These three years, &c.*

*These three Seasons; Observ.* God remembers how many Seasons thou hast mispent: For these three Years signifie so many Seasons. And when the time of Fruit

*drew nigh, that is, about the Season they begin to be ripe, or that according to the Season might so have been. Barren Fig-tree, thou hast had Time, Seasons, Sermons, Ministers, Afflictions, Judgments, Mercies, and what not? and yet hast not been fruitful: thou hast had Awakenings, Reproofs, Threatnings, Comforts, and yet hast not been fruitful: Thou hast had Patterns, Examples, Citations, Provocations, and yet hast not been fruitful. Well, God hath laid up by three years with himself. He remembers every Time, every Season, every Sermon, every Minister, Affliction, Judgment, Mercy, awakening Pattern, Example, Citation, Provocation, He remembers all: As he said of Israel of old, They have tempted me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my Voice, Numb. 14. 22. And again, I remember all their Wickedness, Hof. 7. 2.*

*These three Years, &c.*

He seeks for the Fruit of every Season: He will not that any of his Sermons, Ministers, Afflictions, Judgments or Mercies should be lost, or stand for

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insignificant things; he will have according to the benefit bestowed, 2 Chron. 32. 24, 25. Ezek. 14. 23. He hath not done without a Cause all that he hath done, and therefore he looketh for Fruit; Look to it, barren Fig-tree.

*I came [seeking] Fruit.*

*Observ.* This word [seeking] signifies a narrow search: for when a Man seeks for Fruit on a Tree, he goes round it, and round it, now looking into this Bough, and then into that, he peeks into the inmost Boughs, and the lowermost Boughs, if perhaps Fruit may be thereon.

*Barren Fig-tree,* God will look into all thy Boughs, he will be with thee in thy Bed-Fruits, thy Midnight-Fruits, thy Closet-Fruits, thy Family-Fruits, thy Conversation-Fruits, to see if there be any among all these that are fit for, or worthy of the Name of the God of Heaven. *He sees what the Children of Israel do in the dark*, Ezek. 8. 12. *All things are open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*, Heb. 4. 12, 13.

*Seeking*

Seeking Fruit on [this] Fig-tree.

I told you before, that he keeps in remembrance the Times and Seasons that the barren Professor had wickedly mispent. Now, forasmuch as he also pointeth out the Fig-tree, *This Fig-tree*; it sheweth that the barren Professor, above all Professors, is a continual *odium* in the Eyes of God. *This Fig-tree, This Man Coniah*, Jer. 22. 28. *This* People draw nigh me with their Mouth, but have removed their Hearts far from me. God knows *who they are* among all the thousands of Israel, that are the barren and fruitless Professors; his Lot will fall upon the Head of *Achan*, though he be hid among six hundred thousand Men. And he brought his Household, Man by Man, and *Achan the Son of Carmi, the Son of Zabdi, the Son of Zerah, of the Tribe of Judah, was taken*, Josh. 7. 17, 18. *This is the Achan, this is the Fig-tree, this is the barren Professor.*

There is a Man hath an hundred Trees in his Vineyard, and at the time of the Season, he walketh into his Vineyard to see how the Trees flourish; and as he

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goes, and views, and pries, and observes how they are hanged with Fruit; behold, he comes to one where he findeth nought but Leaves. Now he makes a stand, looks upon it again and again, he looks also here and there, above and below; and if after all this seeking, *he finds nothing but leaves thereon*; Then he begins to cast in his mind, how he may know this Tree next Year, what stands next it, or how far 'tis off the Hedge; but if there be nothing there that may be as a Mark to know it by; then he takes his Hook, and giveth it a private mark, (*And the Lord set a Mark upon Cain, Gen. 4.*) saying, Go thy ways, fruitless Fig-tree, *Thou hast spent this Season in vain.*

Yet doth he not cut it down, I will try it another year; may be this was not a *bitting* Season. Therefore he comes again *next* year to see if now it have Fruit; but as he found it *before*, so he finds it *now*, barren, barren, every year barren; he looks again, *but finds no Fruit.* Now he begins to have *second* thoughts: How! neither hit last year, nor this. Surely the Barrenness is not in the Season, sure the Fault is in the Tree. How-  
ever

## The Barren Fig-tree. 49

ever I will spare it this Year also, but will give it a second Mark: And it may be, *he toucheth it with a hot Iron*, because he begins to be angry.

Well, at the third Season he comes again for Fruit, but the third year is like the first and second, *no Fruit yet; it only cumbereth the ground*. What now must be done with this Fig-tree? Why, *The Lord will lop his Boughs with terror; yea, the Thickets of those Professors with Iron*. *I have waited, saith God, these three years, I have missed of Fruit these three years: It hath been a Cumber-ground these three years, cut it down*. Precept hath been upon Precept, and Line upon Line, one year after another. for *these three years*, but no Fruit can be seen, I find none, fetch out the Ax; I am sure *this* is the Fig-tree, I know it from the first year, *Barrenness* was its sign then, *barrenness* is its sign now, make it fit for the Fire. Behold, *the Ax is laid to the root of the Trees; every Tree therefore that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the Fire*, Matth.

3. 10.

Observe, my Brethren, *God's Heart cannot stand towards a barren Fig-tree.*

## 50 The Barren Fig-tree.

You know thus it is with your selves : If you have a Tree in your Orchard, or Vineyard , that doth *only cumber the Ground*, you cannot look upon that Tree with pleasure, with complacency and delight : No, if you do but go by it, if you do but cast your Eye upon it ; yea, if you do but think of that Tree, you threaten it in your Heart, saying, *I will hew thee down shortly ; I will to the Fire with thee shortly.* And it is in vain for any to think of perswading of you to shew favour to the *barren Fig-tree* ; and if they should perswade, your Answer is irresistible , *It yields me no profit, it takes up room, and doth no good, a better may grow in its room ;*

*Cut it down.*

Thus when the godly among the Jews (Jer. 14. 17.) made Prayers, that rebellious *Israel* might not be cast out of the Vineyard, what saith the Answer of God ? Jer. 15. 1. *Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet could not my mind be towards this People ; wherefore cast them out of my Presence, and let them go forth.*

What



## The Barren Fig-tree. 51

What a Resolution is here! *Moses* and *Samuel* could do almost any thing with God in Prayer. How many times did *Moses* by Prayer turn away God's Judgments from even Pharaoh himself! yea, how many times did he by Prayer preserve *Israel*, when in the Wilderness, (Psal. 106. 23.) from the Anger and Wrath of God? *Samuel* is reckoned excellent this way, yea so excellent, that when *Israel* had done that fearful thing, as to reject the Lord, and chuse them another King, (1 Sam. 12.) he prayed, and the Lord spared, and forgave them: but yet neither *Moses* nor *Samuel* can save a barren Fig-tree. No, though *Moses* and *Samuel* stood before me, that is, pleading, arguing, interceding, supplicating, and beseeching, yet could they not incline mine heart to this People;

Cut it down.

Ah, but Lord it is a Fig-tree, a Fig-tree! if it was a Thorn, or a Bramble, or a Thistle, the matter would not be much; but it is a Fig-tree, or a Vine: Well, but mark the answer of God, Ezek. 15. 2, 3. Son of Man, what is the Vine-

## 52 The Barren Fig-tree.

*Vine-tree, more than any Tree, or than a Branch that is among the Trees of the Forest? shall Wood be taken thereof to do any Work? or will Men take a Pin thereof, to hang any Vessel thereon? If Trees that are set, or planted for Fruit, bring not forth that fruit, there is betwixt them and the Trees of the Forest no betterment at all, unless the betterment lieth in the Trees of the Wood, for they are fit to build withal; but a Fig-tree, or a Vine, if they bring not forth fruit, yea good Fruit, they are fit for nothing at all, but to be cut down, and prepared for the fire; and so the Prophet goes on, Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel: if it serve not for fruit, it will serve for fuel, and so the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the middle of it is burnt.*

Ay but, these Fig-trees and Vines are Church Members, Inhabitants of Jerusalem. So was the Fig-tree mentioned in the Text; but what answer hath God prepared for these Objections? Why, Ver. 6; 7. Thus saith the Lord God, As the Vine-tree among the Trees of the Forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel; so will I give the Inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will set my face against them, they shall

## The Barren Fig-tree. 53

shall go from one fire, and another fire shall devour them :

Cut it down.

The Woman that delighteth in her Garden, if she have a *Slip* there, suppose (if it was fruitful ) she would not take five Pounds for it ; Yet if it bear no Fruit, if it wither, and dwindle, and die, and turn cumber-ground only, it may not stand in her Garden. Gardens and Vineyards are places for *Fruit*, for *Fruit* according to the nature of the plant or flowers. Suppose such a *Slip* as I told you of before, should be in your Garden, and there die: Would you let it abide in your Garden ? No ! away with it, away with it. The Woman comes into her garden towards the Spring, where first she gives it a slight cast with her eye ; then she sets to gathering out the *Weeds*, and *Nettles*, and *Stones* ; takes a *Beesom* and sweeps the *Walks* : this done, she falls to prying into her *Herbs* and *Slips*, to see if they live, to see if they are likely to grow : Now, if she comes to one that is dead, that she is confident will not grow, up she pulls that, and makes to the heap of rubbish with

## 54 The Barren Fig-tree.

with it, where she despisingly casts it down, and valueth it *no more* than a *Nettle*, or a *Weed*, or than the *dust* she hath swept out of her *Walks*. Yea, if any that see her should say, Why do you so? The answer is ready, 'Tis dead, 'tis dead at root: If I had let it stand, 'twould but have cumbered the ground. *The strange Slips* (and also the Dead ones) *they must be a heap in the day of Grief, and of desperate Sorrow*; Isa. 17. 10, 11.

*Cut it down.*

There be *two* manner of cuttings down;

*First*, When a Man is cast out of the Vineyard.

*Secondly*, When a Man is cast out of the World.

*First*, When a Man is cast out of the Vineyard. And that is done *two* ways.

1. *By an immediate hand of God.*
2. *By the Churches due execution of the Laws and Censures which Christ for that purpose hath left with his Church.*

*First*, God cuts down the Barren Fig-tree by an immediate Hand, smiting his Roots, blasting his branches, and so takes

## The Barren Fig-tree. 55

takes him away from among his people. Every Branch, saith Christ, *that beareth not Fruit in me, He (my Father) taketh away*, John 15.2. He taketh him out of the Church, He taketh him away from the Godly. There are *two* things by which God taketh the barren Professor from among the Children of God.

First, *Strong Delusions.*

Secondly, *Open Prophaneness.*

First, By strong Delusions, such as beguile the Soul with damnable Doctrins, that swerve from Faith and Godliness; Isa. 66. 3, 4. *They have chose their own ways, saith God, and their Soul delighteth in their Abominations; I also will chuse their Delusions, and will bring their Fears upon them. I will smite them with blindness, and hardness of Heart, and failing of Eyes, and will also suffer the Tempter to tempt and effect his hellish Designs upon them; 2 Theff. 2. 10, 11, 12. God will send them Strong Delusions, that they may believe a Lie; that they all may be damned who believe not the Truth, but had pleasure in Unrighteousness.*

Secondly, Sometimes God takes away a barren Professor by open Profaneness. There

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There is one hath taken up a Profession of that *worthy Name*, the Lord *Jesus Christ*; but this Profession is but a Cloak, he secretly practiseth Wickedness: He is a Glutton, a Drunkard, or Covetous or Unclean. Well, saith God, I will loose the Reins of this Professor, I will give him up *to his vile Affections*, I will loose the Reins of his Lusts before him, he shall be entangled with his beastly Lust, he shall be overcome of ungodly Company. Thus they that turn aside to their own crooked ways, *Psal. 129. 5. The Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of Iniquity.* This is God's Hand immediately; God is now dealing with this Man himself. *Barren Fig-tree*, hearken, Thou art crouded into a Profession, art got among the Godly, and there art a scandal to the Holy and Glorious Gospel; but withal so cunning, that like the Sons of *Zerviah*, thou art too hard for the Church; She knows not how to deal with thee. Well, saith God, I will deal with that Man my self, *Ezek. 14. 7, 8. I will answer that Man by my self*; he that sets up his Idols in his Heart, and puts the stumbling-block of his Iniquity before his Face, and yet comes and ap-  
pears

appears before me ; I will set my Face against that Man, and will make him a Sign and a Proverb ; and I will cut him off from the midst of my People ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

But , Secondly, God doth sometimes cut down the barren Fig-tree by the Church, by the Churches due execution of the Laws and Censures, which Christ for that purpose hath left with his Church. This is the meaning of that in *Mat. 18. 1. Cor. 5.* and that in *1 Tim. 1. 20.* upon which now I shall not enlarge. But which way soever God deal-eth with thee , O thou barren Fig-tree, whether by himself immediately, or by his Church, it amounts to one and the same. For if timely Repentance prevent not, The end of that Soul is damnation. They are blasted, and withered, and gathered by Men, God's Enemies ; and at last being cast into the Fire, burning must be their end. That which beareth Briars and Thorns , is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned, *Heb. 6. 8.*

And again, sometimes by cut it down, God means, cast it out of the World : Thus he cut down Nadab and Abihu, when

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when he burned them up with Fire from Heaven, Numb. 16. 31, 32, 33. Thus he cut down Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, when he made the Earth to swallow them up. Thus he cut down Saul, 1 Sam. 31. 4. when he gave him up to fall upon the edge of his own Sword, and died. Thus he cut down Ananias with Saphira his Wife, when he struck them down dead in the midst of the Congregation, Acts 5. 5, 10. I might here also discourse of Absolom, Abithophel and Judas, who were all three hanged: The first by Gods revenging Hand, the other were given up of God to be their own Executioners. These were barren and unprofitable Fig-trees, such as God took no pleasure in, therefore he commanded to cut them down. The Psalmist saith, Psal. 58. 9. He shall take them away with a Whirld-wind, both living, and in his Wrath.

Barren Fig-tree, hearken; God calls for the Ax, his Sword, bring it hither, here is a barren Professor, Cut him down, why cumbereth he the Ground?



*Why cumbereth it the Ground?]*

By these words the Lord suggesteth Reasons of his Displeasure against the Barren Fig-tree; *It cumbereth the ground.* The Holy Ghost doth not only take an Argument from its *barrenness*, but because it is a *Cumber-ground*, *Therefore* cut it down; wherefore it must needs be a provocation.

1. Because as much as in him lieth, he disappointeth the Design of God in planting his Vineyard; *I looked that it should bring forth fruit.*

2. It hath also abused his Patience, his long-suffering, *his three years Patience.*

3. It hath also abused his Labour, his Pains, his Care, and providence of Protection and Preservation: for he hedges his Vineyard, and walls it about. *Cumber-ground, all these things thou abusest.* He waters his Vineyard, and looks to it Night and Day, but all these things thou hast abused.

Further, There are other Reasons of God's Displeasure; As,

*First*, A *Cumber-ground* is a very mock and reproach to Religion, a mock and reproach

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reproach to the Ways of God, to the People of God, to the Word of God, and to the Name of Religion. It is expected of all hands, that *all the Trees* in the Garden of God should be fruitful; *God* expects Fruit, the *Church* expects Fruit, the *World*, even the *World* conclude that Professors *should be fruitful in good Works*; I say, the very *World* expecteth that Professors should be better than themselves: But, *barren Fig-tree*, thou disappointest all: Nay, hast thou not learned *the wicked ones* thy Ways? Hast thou not learned them to be more wicked by thy Example, (but that's by the by:) *Barren Fig-tree*, Thou hast disappointed others, and *must be disappointed thy self*. Cut it down, *why lumbereth it the ground?*

Secondly, The barren Fig-tree takes up the room where a better Tree might stand; I say, it takes up the room, it keeps, so long as it stands where it doth, a fruitful Tree out of that place, and therefore it must be cut down. *Barren Fig-tree*, Dost thou hear? Because the *Jews* stood fruitless in the Vineyard; Therefore, said God, *Mat. 21. 33--41. The Kingdom of Heaven shall be taken from you, and shall be*

## The Barren Fig-tree. 61

be given to a Nation that shall render him their Fruits in their Season. The Jews for their barrenness were cut down, and more fruitful People put in their room. As Samuel also said to barren Saul, 1 Sam. 15. 28. *The Lord hath rent the Kingdom from thee, and hath given it to thy Neighbour that is better than thou; the unprofitable Servant must be cast out, must be cut down, Mat. 25. 27.*

*Cumber-ground!* How many hopeful, inclinable, forward People, hast thou by thy fruitless and unprofitable Life, kept out of the Vineyard of God; for thy sake have the People stumbled at Religion; by thy Life have they been kept from the Love of their own Salvation. Thou hast been also a means of hardening others, and of quenching, and killing weak beginnings. Well, *barren Fig-tree!* look to thy self, (thou wilt not go to Heaven thy self, and them that would, thou hinderest;) Thou must not always Cumber the Ground, nor always hinder the Salvation of others: Thou shalt be cut down, and another shall be planted in thy room.

*Thirdly,* The Cumber-ground is a Sucker, he draws away the Heart and Nourishment

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ment from the other Trees. Were the Cumber-ground cut down, the other would be more fruitful ; he draws away that fatness of the ground to himself, that would make the other more hearty and fruitful. *One Sinner destroyeth much good, Eccl. 9. 18.*

The Cumber-ground is a very Droan in the Hive, that eats up the Honey that should feed the labouring Bee ; he is a Thief in the Candle, that wasteth the Tallow, but giveth no Light ; he is the unsavoury Salt, that is fit for nought but the Dunghil. Look to it *Barren Fig-tree.*

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*And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this Year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it ; and if it bear Fruit, well ; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down, v. 8, 9.*

These are the words of the Dresser of the Vineyard, who, I told you, is Jesus Christ (for he made intercession for the Transgressors.) And they contain a Petition, presented to an offended Justice, praying that a little more time, and Patience might be exercised towards the barren,

## The Barren Fig-tree. 63

barren, cumber-ground *Fig-tree*.

In this Petition there are Six things considerable :

*First*, That Justice might be *deferred*, That Justice might be *deferred*. Lord, let it *alone*, &c. a while longer.

*Secondly*, Here is *time* prefixed, as a space to try if more means will cure a barren *Fig-tree*. Lord let it *alone* this Year also.

*Thirdly*, The means to help it, are propounded, *until I shall dig about it, and dung it*.

*Fourthly*, Here is also an insinuation of a Supposition, that by thus doing, God's expectation may be answered, *And if it bear Fruit, well*.

*Fifthly*, Here is a Supposition that the barren *Fig-tree* may yet abide barren, when Christ hath done *what he will unto it, and if it bear Fruit, &c.*

*Sixthly*, Here is at last a Resolution, that if thou continue barren, *hewing Days will come upon thee*. And if it bear Fruit, well, *And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down*.

But to proceed according to my former Method, by way of Exposition.

Lord,

*Lord, let it alone this Year also.*

Here is astonishing Grace indeed, astonishing Grace! I say, that the Lord Jesus should concern himself with a *barren Fig-tree*; that He should step in to stop the blow from a *barren Fig-tree*. True, He stopt the blow but for a time: But *why did he stop it at all?* Why did not he fetchout the Ax? Why did he not do Execution? *Why did not he cut it down?* *Barren Fig-tree!* 'tis well for thee that there is a Jesus at God's right Hand, a Jesus of that largeness of bowels, *And he have compassion for a barren Fig-tree*, else Justice had never let thee alone to cumber the Ground as thou hast done. When *Israel* also had sinned against God, down they had gone, *But that Moses stood in the breach*, *Exod. 32. 10.* *Let me alone*, said God to him, *that I may consume them in a moment*, *and I will make of thee a great Nation.* *Barren Fig-tree*, dost thou hear? Thou knowest not how oft the hand of Divine Justice hath been up to strike, and how many years since thou hadst been cut down, had not Jesus caught hold of his Fathers Ax. *Let me alone*, let me

## The Barren Fig tree. 65

me fetch my blow, or cut it down, why  
cumbereth it the ground? Wilt thou not  
hear yet, *Barren Fig-tree*? Wilt thou  
provoke still! *Thou hast wearied Men,*  
and provoked the Justice of God; *And*  
wilt thou weary my God also? Isa. 7. 13.

*Lord, let it alone this Year.]*

Lord, a little longer, let's not lose a  
Soul for want of means; *I will try, I*  
will see if I can make it fruitful, *I will*  
beg a long *Life*, nor that it might still  
be barren, and so provoke thee. I beg for  
the sake of the Soul, the immortal Soul,  
Lord spare it *one year only, one year lon-*  
*ger, this year also*; if I do any Good to  
it will be in *little time*. Thou shalt  
not be over-wearied with waiting, *one*  
*year, and then.*

*Barren Fig-tree*, Dost thou hear what  
living there is between the *Vine-dresser*  
and the *Husband-man* for thy Life. Cut  
down, says one; Lord, spare it, saith  
the other: 'Tis a cumber-ground, saith  
the Father; one year longer prays the  
Son, *Let it alone this year also.*

D

Until

## 66 The Barren Fig-tree.

*Until I shall dig about it and dung it.*

The Lord *Jesus* by these words supposeth two things, as Causes of the want of Fruit in a barren Fig-tree, and two things he supposeth as a Remedy.

The things that are a cause of want of Fruit, are,

1. 'Tis Earth-bound; Lord, the Fig-tree is Earth-bound.
2. A want of warmer means, of faster means.

Wherefore accordingly he propoundeth ;

First, *To loosen the Earth, to dig about it.*

Secondly, *And then to supply it with Dung ; to dig about it , and dung it.* Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it. I doubt it is too much ground-bound, The love of this World, and the deceitfulness of Riches, ( Luke 14.) lie too close to the Roots of the Heart of this Professor. The love of Riches, the Love of Honours, the Love of Pleasures, are the Thorns that choak the Word ; 1 Joh. 2. 15, 16. For all that is in the World, the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lusts of the Eyes, and the Pride



## The Barren Fig-tree. 67

of Life, are not of the Father, but enemy to God;) how then (where these things bind up the Heart) can there be Fruit brought forth to God? *Barren Fig-tree*, see how the Lord Jesus, by these very words, suggesteth the cause of thy fruitfulness of Soul. The things of this World lie too close to thy Heart; the Earth with its things have bound up thy Roots. Thou art an Earth-bound Soul, thou art wrapt up in thick Clay. If any man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him: How then can he be fruitful in the Vineyard? This kept Judas from the Fruit of caring for the poor, *Job. 12. 6.* This kept Demas from the Fruit of Self-denial, *2 Tim. 4. 10.* And this kept Ananias and Saphira his Wife, from the goodly Fruit of Sincerity and Truth, *Acts 5. 5, 10.* What shall I say, These are foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown men in Destruction and Perdition; for the love of Money is the root of all Evil, *1 Tim. 6. 9, 10.* How then can good Fruit grow from such a Root, the Root of all Evil; Which while some covet after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows. It is an evil Root, nay, it is the Root of

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all Evil : how then can the Professor that hath such a Root, or a Root wrap'd up in such earthly things, as the Lusts, and Pleasures, and Vanities of this World, bring forth Fruit to God !

*Until I shall [dig] about it.]*

Lord, I will loose his Roots, *I will dig up this Earth*, I will lay his Roots bare ; my Hand shall be upon him by Sicknes, by Disappointments, by cross Providences ; I will dig about him until he stands shaking and tottering, until he be ready to fall ; then, if ever, he will seek to take faster hold. Thus, I say, deals the Lord Jesus oft-times with the barren Professor ; *he diggerth about him*, he smiteth *one* blow at his Heart, *another* blow at his Lusts, *a third* at his Pleasures, *a fourth* at his Comforts, *another* at his Self-conceitedness ; thus he diggerth about him : This is the way to take bad Earth from his Roots, and to loosen his Roots from the Earth. *Barren Fig-tree*, see here the Care, the Love, the Labour and Way, which the Lord Jesus, the Dresser of the Vineyard, is fain to take with thee, if happily thou mayest be made fruitful.

*Until*

## The Barren Fig-tree. 69

*Until I shall dig about it, and [dung] it.*

As the Earth, by binding the Roots too closely, may hinder the Tree's being fruitful; so the want of better Means may be also a cause thereof. And this is more than intimated by the Dresser of the Vineyard, *until I shall dig about it, and dung it*, I will supply it with a more fruitful Ministry, with a warmer Word. I will give them Pastors *after mine own Heart, I will dung them*; You know *Dung* is a more warm, more fat, more hearty, and succouring Matter, than is commonly the place in which Trees are planted.

*I will dig about it, and dung it*, I will bring it under an *heart-awakening* Ministry, the Means of Grace *shall be fat*, and good. I will also visit it with Heart-awakening, Heart-warming, Heart-encouraging Considerations; I will apply warm *Dung* to *his Roots*, I will strive with him by my Spirit, and give him some taste of the Heavenly Gift, and the power of the world to come. I am loth to lose him for want

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of digging; Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it.

*And if it bear Fruit, well.]*

And if the Fruit of all my Labour doth make this Fig-tree fruitful, I shall count my Time, my Labour and Means well bestowed upon it; And thou also, O my God, shall be therewith much delighted: For thou art gracious, and merciful, and repentest thee of the Evil which thou threatnest to bring upon a People.

These words therefore inform us, that if a barren Fig-tree, a barren Professor, shall now at last bring forth Fruit to God, it shall go well with that Professor, it shall go well with that poor Soul. His former Barrenness, his former tempting of God, his abuse of God's Patience, and long-suffering; his mispending Year after Year, shall now be all forgiven him. Yea, God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ will now pass by, and forget all, and say, *Well done*, at the last. VWhen I say to the wicked, *O wicked Man, thou shalt surely die*; if he then do that which is lawful and right, if he walks in the Statutes of Life, without committing Iniquity, he shall

shall surely live, *he shall not die*, Ezek.

3.3.

Barren Fig-tree, *Dost thou hear!* the Ax is laid to thy Roots, the Lord Jesus prays God to spare thee: Hath he been digging about thee? Hath he been dunging of thee? O barren Fig-tree, now thou art come to the Point; if thou shalt now become good, if thou shalt after a gracious manner suck in the Gospel-dung, and if thou shalt bring forth Fruit unto God, well; but if not, *the Fire is the last*. Fruit, or the Fire; Fruit, or the Fire, Barren Fig-tree. *If it bear Fruit, well.*

*And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

*And if not, &c.* The Lord Jesus by this, *If*, giveth us to understand, that there is a Generation of Professors in the world, that are incurable, that will not, that cannot repent, nor be profited by the means of Grace: A Generation, I say, that will retain a Profession, but will not bring forth Fruit: A Generation that will wear out the Patience of God, Time and Tide, Threatings and In-

tercessions, Judgments and Mercies, *And after all will be unfruitful.*

O the desperate wickedness that is in thy Heart ! Barren Professor, Dost thou hear, the Lord Jesus stands yet in doubt about thee ! There is an [ if ] stands yet in the way. I say, the Lord Jesus stands yet in doubt about thee, whether or no at last thou wilt be good ; whether he may not labour in vain ; whether his digging and dunging will come to more than lost labour. *I gave her space to repent, and she repented not, Rev. 2. 21.* I digged about it, I dunged it ; I gained Time, and supplied it with means ; but I laboured herein in vain, and spent my strength for nought and in vain. Dost thou hear, *Barren Fig-tree !* There is yet a Question, *Whether 'twill be well with thy Soul at last ?*

*And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.]*

There is nothing more exasperating to the Mind of a Man, than to find all his kindness and favour slighted : Neither is the Lord Jesus so provoked with any thing, as when Sinners abuse his Means

And Means of Grace, if it be barren and fruitless under my Gospel; if it turn my Grace into wantonness; if after thou digging, and dunging, and waiting, it ~~double~~ yet remain unfruitful, I will let thee ~~be~~ cut it down.

And Gospel-means applied, is the last Remedy for a barren Professor; if the Gospel be not do, there can be nothing expected, more but cut it down. Then after that thou shalt cut it down.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that kildest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, as an Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and yet thou wouldst not? Therefore your Houses are left unto you desolate, Matth. 23. 37, 38.

Yet it cannot be, but that this Lord Jesus, who at first did put a stop to the execution of his Fathers Justice, because he desired to try more Means with the Fig-tree: I say, it cannot be, but that an Heart so full of Compassion, as his is, should be touched, to behold this Professor must now be cut down; Luke 19. 41, 42. And when he was come near, he beheld the City, and wept over it, saying, If

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thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things that belong to the Peace, but now they are hid from thine Eyes.

*After that, thou shalt cut it down.]*

VWhen Christ giveth thee over, there is no Intercessor, no Mediator, no more Sacrifice for Sin: all is gone but Judgment, but the Ax, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries, Heb. 10. 26, 27, 28.

Barren Fig-tree, take heed that thou comest not to these last words, for these words are a give-up, a cast-up, a cast-up of a cast-away; after that thou shalt cut it down. They are as much, as Christ had said, Father, I begg'd for more time for this barren Professor; I begged until I should dig about it, and dung it: But now, Father, the time is out, the Year is ended, the Summer is ended, and no good done. I have also tried with my means, with the Gospel, I have digged about it; I have laid all the fat and hearty dung of the Gospel to it; but all comes to nothing. Father, deliver



deliver up this Professor to thee again, I have done, I have done all, I have done praying, and endeavouring, I will hold the head of thine Ax No longer : Take him into the Hands of Justice, do Justice, do the Law, I will never beg for him more. After that thou shalt cut it down. Wo unto them when I depart from them, Hos. 9. 12. Now is this Professor left naked indeed, naked to God, naked to Satan, naked to Sin, naked to the Law, naked to Death, naked to Hell, naked to Judgment, and naked to the Gripes of a guilty Conscience, and to the torment of that Worm that never dies, and to that Fire that never shall be quenched, Heb. 12. 25. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh ; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on Earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven. From this brief pass through this Parable, you have these two general Observations ;

First, That even then when the Justice of God cries out, I cannot endure to wait on this barren Professor any longer : Then Jesus Christ intercedes for a little more Patience, and a little more striving with this Professor, if possible he may make him

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him a fruitful Professor. *Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it, and if it bear Fruit, well, &c.*

Secondly, There are some Professors whose Day of Grace will end with, *cut it down*, with Judgment; when Christ by his means, hath been used for their Salvation.

The First of these Observations I shall pass, and not meddle at all therewith. But shall briefly speak to the Second, to wit,

*That there are some Professors, whose Day of Grace will end with, cut it down with Judgment, when Christ by his means hath been used for their Salvation.*

This the Apostle sheweth in that third Chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews where he tells us, that the People of the Jews, after a forty years Patience, and endeavour to do 'em good by the means appointed for that purpose, their end was to be cut down, or excluded the Land of Promise, for their final incredulity. So we see they could not enter in, because of Unbelief. Wherefore saith he, *I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their Hearts, and they have not known my ways: So I swore*

my Wrath, thy shall not enter into my Rest. As who should say, I would they should have entred in, and for that purpose I brought them out of Egypt, led them through the Sea, and taught them in the Wilderness, but they did not answer my Work nor Designs in that matter : wherefore, they shall not, I sware they shall not ; I swore in my Wrath they should not enter into my Rest : Here is cutting down with Judgment. So again, Chap. 4. he saith, *As I have sworn in my Wrath, if they shall enter into my Rest, although the Works were finished from the Foundation of the World, Heb. 4. 2, 3, 4.* This word [if] is the same with [they shall not] in the Chapter before. And where he saith, *Although the Works were finish'd from the Foundation of the World.* He giveth us to understand, that what preparations soever are made for the Salvation of Sinners, and of how long continuance soever they are, yet the God-tempting, God-provoking, and fruitless Professor is like to go without a share therein ; *although the Works were finish'd from the Foundation of the World.* Jude 5, 6. *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that*  
the

the Lord having saved the People out of the Land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not. And the Angels that kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day. Here is an Instance to purpose, an Instance of Men and Angels: Men saved out of the Land of Egypt, and in their Journey towards Canaan, the Type of Heaven [cut down] Angels created and placed in the Heavens in great Estate and Principality; yet both these, because unfruitful to God in their places, were cut down, the Men destroyed by God, (for so saith the Text) and the Angels reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day.

Now, in my handling of this Point, I shall discourse of the cutting down, or the Judgment here denounced, as it respecteth the doing of it by God's Hand immediately, and that too, with respect to his casting them out of the World; and not as it respecteth an Act of the Church, &c. And as to this cutting down, or Judgment, it must be concluded, that it cannot be before the Day of Grace.

Grace be past with the Fig-tree. But according to the Observation, *There be some Professors whose Day of Grace will end, with cut it down*; and according to the words of the Text, *Then [after that] thou shalt cut it down. After that*, that is, after all my Attempts and Endeavours to make it fruitful, after I have left it, given it over, done with it, and have resolved to bestow no more Days of Grace, Opportunities of Grace, and Means of Grace upon it; then, *after that*, thou shalt cut it down.

Besides, the *giving up* of the Fig-tree, is before the Execution. Execution is not always presently upon the Sentence given; for *after that* a convenient Time is thought on, and then is *cutting down*: And so it is here in the Text. The Decree, that he shall perish, is gathered from its continuing fruitless quite through the last Year, from its continuing fruitless at the end of all Endeavours: But *cutting down* is not yet, for that comes with an after-word; *Then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

So then, that I may orderly proceed with the Observation, I must lay down these two Propositions.

Prop.

## 80 The Barren Fig-tree.

*Prop. 1. That the Day of Grace ends with some Men before God takes them out of this World. And,*

*Prop. 2. The Death, or cutting down of such Men, will be dreadful. For this cut it down, when it is understood in the largest sense, (as here indeed it ought) it sheweth, not only the Wrath of God against a Man's Life in this World, but his Wrath against him Body and Soul. And is as much as to say, cut him off from all the Priviledges and Benefits that come by Grace, both in this World and that which is to come.*

*But to proceed, The Day of Grace ends with some Men, before God taketh them out of this World.*

*I shall give you some Instances of this and so go on to the last Proposition.*

*First, I shall instance, Cain; Cain was a Professor, (Gen. 4. 3.) a Sacrificer, a Worshiper of God; yea, the first Worshiper that we read of after the Fall; but his Grapes were wild ones, Gen. 4. 5, 8, his Works were evil, he did not do what he did, from true Gospel-motives: therefore God disallowed his Work: and this his Countenance falls: Wherefore he envies his Brother, disputes him, takes*

## The Barren Fig-tree. 81

his opportunity and kills him. Now in that day that he did this Act, were the Heavens closed up against him, and that himself did smartingly & fearfully feel, when God made Inquisition for the Blood of *Abel*; *And now cursed* (said God) *shalt thou be from the Earth, which hath opened her Mouth to receive thy Brother's Blood from thy Hand, &c. Gen. 4. 11, 12, 13, 14. And Cain said, My Punishment is greater than I can bear. Mine Iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven. Behold, thou hast driven me out this Day from the Face of the Earth, and from my Face shall I be hid. Now thou art cursed, saith God. Thou hast driven me out this Day, saith Cain, and from my Face shall I be hid; I shall never more have hope in thee, Smile from thee, nor expect Mercy at thy Hand. Thus therefore, Cain's Day of Grace ended, and the Heavens, with God's own Heart, were shut up against him; yet after this, he lived long, Gen. 4. 10. Cutting down was not come yet; after this he lived to marry a Wife, vers. 17. to beget a cursed Brood, to build a City, (and what else I know not) all which could not be quickly done: Wherefore Cain might*

## 81 The Batten Fig-tree.

might live after the Day of Grace was past with him, several hundred of years.

Secondly, I shall instance *Ishmael*, Gen. 17. 25, 26. *Ishmael* was a Professor, was brought up in *Abraham's* Family, and was circumcised at thirteen years of Age Gen. 16. 12. But he was the Son of the *Bond-woman*, he brought not forth good Fruit, he was a *wild Professor*: For all Religion, he would scoff at those that were better than himself. Well, upon a day his Brother *Isaac* was weaned, which time his Father made a Feast, and rejoiced before the Lord, for that he had given him the promised Son; at which time *Ishmael* mocked them, their Son, and goodly rejoycing. Then came the Spirit of God upon *Sarah*, and she cried, Cast out, cast out this *Bond-woman* and her Son, for the Son of this *Bond-woman* shall not be Heir with my Son, with *Isaac*, Gen. 21. 9, 10, 11. Now *Paul* to the *Galatians* (Chap. 4. 29, 30, 31.) makes this casting out to be, not only a casting out of *Abraham's* Family, but a casting out also from a Lot with the Saints in Heaven. Also *Moses* giveth us a notable proof thereof, in saying, that when he died he was gathered to his People, Gen. 25.



his People by his Mother's side, for he  
 was reckoned from her, the Son of *Ha-*  
*ram*, the Son of the Bond-woman. Now  
 he came of the *Egyptians*, Gen. 21. 9.  
 so that he was gathered when he died,  
 notwithstanding his Profession, to the  
 place that *Pharaoh* and his Host were  
 gathered to, who were drowned in the  
*Red Sea*; these were his People, and he  
 was of them, both by Nature and Dis-  
 position, by persecuting as they did.  
 But now, *When did the Day of Grace*  
*end with this Man?* Observe, and I will  
 shew you: *Ishmael* was thirteen years old  
 when he was circumcised; and then was  
*Abraham* ninety years old and nine, Gen.  
 21. 24, 25, 26. The next year *Isaac*  
 was born. So that *Ishmael* was now  
 fourteen Years of Age. Now when *Isaac*  
 was weaned, (suppose he suck'd four  
 years) by that account, *The Day of*  
*Grace must be ended with Ishmael*; by that  
 time he was eighteen years old, Gen. 25.  
 12, &c. For that day he mocked, that  
 day it was said, *Cast him out*; and of  
 that casting out, the Apostle makes  
 what I have said. Beware ye young  
 Barren Professors. Now *Ishmael* lived  
 hundred and nineteen years after this,  
 in

## 84 The Barren Fig-tree.

in great tranquility and honour with Men: After this he also begat twelve Princes, even after his Day of Grace was past.

*Thirdly*, I shall instance *Eſau*, Gen. 2. 27, &c. *Eſau* alſo was a Profeſſor, was born unto *Iſaac*, and circumciſed according to the cuſtom: But *Eſau* was gameſom Profeſſor, an Huntsman, a Man of the Field; alſo he was wedded to Luſts, which he did alſo venture to keep rather than the Birth-right. Well, upon a day, when he came from hunting and was faint, he ſold his Birth-right to *Jacob* his Brother. Now the Birth-right, in thoſe days, had the Promise and Bleſſing annexed to it. Yea, they were ſo entailed in this, that the one could not go without the other, wherefore the Apoſtle's Caution is here of weight; Heb. 12. 16, 17. Take heed ſaith he, leſt there be among you a Fornicator, or profane Perſon as *Eſau*, who for one morſel of Meat ſold his Birth-right for ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the Bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears. Now the ending of *Eſau's* Day

## The Barren Fig-tree. / 85

Grace is to be reckoned from his selling of his Birth-right: For there the Apostle points it, lest there be among any, that like *Esau*, sells his Birth-right: for then goes hence the Blessing

But *Esau* sold his Birth-right long before his Death. *Twenty Years* after this, *Jacob* was with *Laban*, (*Gen. 31. 41. & 46.*) and when he returned home, his brother *Esau* met him. Further, after when *Jacob* dwelt again some time with his Father, then *Jacob* and *Esau* buried him. I suppose (*Gen. 35. 28, 29.*) he might live above *forty*, yea for ought now, above *four score* years after he had sold his Birth-right, and so consequently put himself out of the grace of God. Three things I would further note up- these three Professors.

First, *Cain* an angry Professor, *Ishmael* a mocking one, *Esau* a lustful, gamester one: Three Symptoms of a barren Professor. For he that can be angry, and that can mock, and that can indulge his passions, cannot bring forth Fruit to God. Secondly, The Day of Grace ended with these Professors at that time when they committed some grievous Sin;  
*Cain's*

## 86 The Barren fig-tree.

*Cain's*, when he killed his Brother; *Ishmael's*, when he mocked at *Isaac*, &c. and *Esau*, when out of love to his Lusts, he despised, and sold his Birth-right. Beware, barren Professor; *Thou mayst die that in half a quarter of an hour, from the evil of which thou mayst not be delivered for ever and ever.*

*Thirdly*, Yet these three, after their Day of Grace was over, lived better lives as to outward things, than ever they did before. *Cain*, after this, was Lord of a City, *Gen.* 4. 17. *Ishmael* was after this, Father of twelve Princes, *Gen.* 25. 16. and *Esau* after this, told his Brother, *I have enough, my Brother, keep that thou hast to thy self*, *Chap.* 33. 8, 9. Ease, and Peace, and a prosperous Life in outward things, is no sign of the Favour of God to a barren and fruitless Professor; But rather of his *Wrath*, that thereby he may be capable to treasure up more *Wrath* against the day of *Wrath*, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.

Let thus much serve for the proof of the first Proposition, namely, *That the day of Grace ends with some Men, before God takes them out of this World.*

## The Barren Fig-tree. 87

Now then, to shew you, by some means, how you may know that the day of Grace is ended, or near to ending in the Barren Professor; *And after that thou shalt cut it down.*

*First*, He that hath stood it out against God, and that hath withstood all those means for Fruit, that God hath used for the making of him (if it might have been) a fruitful Tree in his Garden, he is in this danger; and this indeed is the meaning of the *Parable*. The Fig-tree here mentioned, was blessed with the application of means, had time allowed it to receive the nourishment; but it outlasted, withstood, overstood *All*, *All* that the Husbandman did, *All* that the Gardener did.

### *Signs of being past Grace.*

But a little distinctly to particularize *four or five* Particulars:

*First Sign*. The Day of Grace is like the past, when a Professor hath withstood, abused, and worn out God's Patience, then he is in danger, this is a Proclamation, then God cries, *Cut it down.* There are some Men that steal into a Profess-

Profession, *no body knows how*; even as this Fig-tree was brought into the Vineyard by other hands than God's; and there they abide liveless, graceless, careless, *and without any good Conscience to God at all*. Perhaps they came in for the Loaves, for a Trade, for Credit, for a Blind; or it may be to stifle and choak the Checks, and grinding Pangs of an awakened and disquieted Conscience. Now having obtain'd their purpose, *like the Sinners of Sion*, they are at ease, and secure; Saying, *like Agag*, 1 Sam. 15. 32. *Surely the bitterness of Death is past*: I am well, I shall be saved, and go to Heaven: Thus in these vain conceits it spends a year, two, or three; not remembring that at every Season of Grace, and at every opportunity of the Gospel, *the Lord comes seeking Fruit*. Well, Sinner, well-barren Fig-tree, this is but a course beginning. God comes for Fruit. What have I here, saith God? What a Fig-tree is this, that hath stood this year in my Vineyard, and brought me forth no Fruit. I will cry unto him, *Professor! Barren Fig-tree, be fruitful! I look for Fruit*. I expect Fruit, I must have Fruit, therefore bethink thy self. At these the

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 Professor pauses ; but these are words,  
*not blows*, therefore off goes this Consideration from the Heart : When God comes the next Year, he finds him still as he was, a *barren, fruitless cumber-ground*. And now again he complains, here are *two years gone*, and *no Fruit* appears ; Well, I will defer mine anger for my Name sake, *Isa. 48. 9. I will defer mine anger for my Praise, I will refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off* (as yet.) I will wait, I will yet wait to be gracious. But this helps not, this hath not the least influence upon the barren Fig-tree, *Tush*, with he, here is *no Threatning* : God is *merciful*, he will defer his anger, *Isa. 30. 8. He waits to be gracious : I am not afraid*. O how ungodly Men, that great unawares crept into the Vineyard, *now do they turn the Grace of our God into divisions* ! Well, he comes the third year for Fruit, as he did before, but still he finds *but a barren Fig-tree* ; No fruit : now he cries out again, *O thou dresser of my Vineyard, come hither, there's a Fig-tree hath stood these three years in my Vineyard, and hath at every season disappointed my expectation, for I have looked for Fruit in vain ; Cut it*  

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down,

down, my patience is worn out, *I shall wait on this Fig-tree no longer.*

2. And now he begins to shake the *Fig-tree* with his threatnings; fetch out the *Ax*. Now the *Ax* is Death, Death therefore is called for: Death, come, smite me *this Fig-tree*. And withal the Lord shakes this Sinner, and whirles him upon a Sick-bed, saying, *Take him Death*, he hath abused my Patience and Forbearance, not remembring that it should have led him to Repentance, and to the Fruits thereof. *Death, fetch away this Fig-tree to the fire*, fetch this barren Professor to Hell. At this, Death comes with *grim* looks into the Chamber, yea, and Hell follows with him to the Bed-side, and both stare this Professor in the face, yea, begin to lay hands upon him, one smiting him with pains in his Body with Head-ach, Heart-ach, Back-ach, Shortness of Breath, Fainting, Qualms, Trembling of Joynts, Stopping at the Chest, and almost all the Symptoms of a Man past all recovery. Now while Death is thus tormenting the Body, Hell is doing with the Mind and Conscience, striking them with its Pains, casting sparks of Fire in thither, wounding with for



## The Barren Fig-tree. 91

rows and fears of everlasting damnation, the Spirit of this poor Creature: And now he begins to bethink himself, and to cry to God for Mercy; *Lord, spare me, Lord, spare me.* Nay, saith God, you have been a Provocation to me *these three Years.* How many times have you disappointed me? How many Seasons have you spent in vain? How many Sermons and other Mercies did I of my Patience afford you? but to no purpose at all, *Take him Death.* O good Lord, saith the Sinner, Spare me but *this once*; Raise me but *this once.* Indeed I have been a barren Professor, and have stood to no purpose at all in thy Vineyard: But spare! O spare *this one time*, I beseech thee, and I will be better. *Away, away,* you will not. I have tried you *these three years* already, you are nought; If I should recover you again, you would be as bad as you was before (and all this talk is while Death stands by.) The Sinner cries again, Good Lord, try me *this once*, let me get up again *this once*, and see if I do not mend. But will you promise me to mend? Yes indeed, Lord, and vow it too; I will never be so bad again, *I will be better.* Well, saith God,

Death, let this Professor alone for this time. I will try him a while longer, he hath promised, he hath vowed that he will amend his ways. It may be he will mind to keep his Promises. *Vows* are solemn things, it may be he may fear to break his *Vows*: Arise from off thy Bed; and now God laies down his *Ax*. At this the poor Creature is very thankful, praises God, and fawns upon him, shews as if he did it heartily, and calls to others to thank him too. He therefore riseth as one would think, to be a new creature indeed. But by that he hath put on his Clothes, is come down from his Bed, and ventured into the Yard, or Shop, and there sees how all things are gone to *Sixes* and *Sevens*, he begins to have *second* thoughts; and says to his folks, What have you all been doing? How are all things out of order? I am I cannot tell what behind-hand; one may see if a Man be but a little a-to-side, that you have neither Wisdom, nor Prudence to order things: And now, instead of seeking to spend the rest of his time to God, he doubleth his Diligence after this World. Alas, all must not be lost, we must have provident care: and thus quite

## The Barren Fig tree. 93

quite forgetting the Sorrows of Death, the pains of Hell, the Promises and Vows which he made to God to be better: *Because Judgment was not (now) speedily executed, therefore the Heart of this poor Creature is fully set in him to do evil.*

These things proving ineffectual, God takes hold of his Ax again, sends Death to a VVife, to a Child, to his Cattel, (*your young Men have I slain, and taken away your Horses, Amos 4. 9, 10.*) I will blast him, cross him, disappoint him, and cast him down, and will set my self against him, *in all that he putteth his Hand unto.* At this the poor barren Professor cries out again, Lord, I have sinned, spare me once more, I beseech thee. O take not away the desire of mine Eyes, spare my Children, bless me in my labours, and I will mend and be better. No, saith God, you lied to me last time, I will trust you *in this* no longer, and withal he tumbleth the VVife, the Child, the Estate, into a grave.

And then returns to his place, till this Professor more unfeignedly acknowledgeth his Offence, *Hos. 5. 14, 15.*

At this the poor creature is afflicted and distressed, rents his Cloaths, and be-

gins to call the breaking of his Promise and vows to mind, he mourns and prays, and like *Ahab*, a while walks softly, at the remembrance of the justness of the hand of God upon him. And now he renews his Promises, Lord, try me *this one time more*, take off thy hand and see; *They go far that never turn*. Well, God spareth him again, sets down his *Ax* again: *Many times he did deliver them, but they provoked them with their Counsels, and were brought low for their Iniquities*, Psal. 106. 43. Now they seem to be thankful again, and are as if they were resolved to be Godly indeed. Now they Read, they Pray, they go to Meetings, and seem to be serious a pretty while, but at last they forget. Their Lusts prick them, suitable Temptations present themselves: wherefore they turn to their own crooked ways again. Ps. 78. 34, 36. *When he slew them, then they sought him, and returned early after God, nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lyed unto him with their Tongue.*

4. Yet again, The Lord will not leave this Professor, but will take up his *Ax* again, and will put him under a more heart-searching Ministry, a Ministry that shall

shall search him, and turn him over and over; a Ministry that shall meet with him, as *Elijah* met with *Ahab*, in all his acts of Wickedness (and Now the *Ax* is laid to the Roots of the Trees.) Besides, this Ministry doth not only search the Heart, but presenteth the Sinner with the golden Rays of the glorious Gospel; Now is *Christ Jesus* set forth evidently, now is Grace displayed sweetly; Now, now are the Promises broken like Boxes of Ointment to the perfuming of the whole room. But alas, there is yet no Fruit on this Fig-tree. While his Heart is searching, he wrangles; while the glorious Grace of the Gospel is unvail- ing, this Professor wags and is wanton, gathers up some scraps thereof, Tastes the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, Jude 4. Drinketh in the Rain that comes oft upon him, Heb. 6. 3, 7, 8. But bringeth not forth Fruit meet for him, whose Gospel it is; takes no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord God of Israel with all his Heart, 2 King. 10. 31. but counteth that the Glory of the Gospel consisteth in talk and shew, and that our Obedi- ence thereto, is a matter of Speculation; that good Works lie in good Words, and

if they can finely talk, they think they *bravely* please God. They think the Kingdom of God consisteth only in Word, not in Power : and thus proveth ineffectual this *Fourth* means also.

5. VVell, Now the *Ax* begins to be heaved higher, for now indeed God is ready to smite the Sinner, yet before he will strike the stroak, he will try one way more at the last, and if that misfeth, *down goes the Fig-tree.* Now this last way is *to tug and strive with this Professor by his Spirit.* VVherefore the Spirit of the Lord is now come to him : But *not always to strive with Man,* Gen. 6. 8, yet a while he will strive with him, he will *awaken*, he will *convince*, he will call to remembrance former Sins, former Judgments, the breach of former Vows and Promises, the mispending of former Days ; he will also present persuasive Arguments, encouraging Promises, dreadful Judgments, the shortness of time to repent in ; and that there is hope if he come. Further, he will shew him the certainty of Death, and of the Judgment to come ; yea, He will pull and strive with this Sinner. But, behold, the mischief now lies here, here is

## The Barren Fig-tree. 97

is tugging and striving on both sides. The *Spirit* convinces, the *Man* turns a deaf Ear to God; the *Spirit* saith, Receive my Instruction and live; but the *Man* pulls away his Shoulder; the *Spirit* shews him whither he is going, but the *Man* closeth his Eyes against it; the *Spirit* offereth violence, the *Man* strives and resists, *They have done despite unto the Spirit of Grace*, Heb. 10. 29. The *Spirit* parlieth a second time, and urgeth Reasons of a new Nature; But the Sinner answereth, *No, I have loved strangers, and after them will I go*, Amos 4. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11. At this God's Fury comes up into his Face, now he comes out of his holy Place, and is terrible: now He sweareth in his Wrath, *they shall never enter into his Rest*, Ezek. 24. 13. I exercised towards you my Patience, yet you have not turned unto me, saith the Lord. I smote you in your Person, in your Relations, in your Estate, yet you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. *In thy filthiness is lewdness, because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged; thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I cause my Fury to rest upon thee. Cut it down, why doth it cumber the ground?*

## 98 The Barren Fig-tree.

The *Second Sign*, That such a Profes-  
 sor is almost (if not quite) past Grace,  
 is, *When God hath given him over, or lets*  
*him alone, and suffers him to do any thing,*  
*and that without controul, helpeth him*  
*not either in Works of Holiness, or in*  
*Straits and Difficulties. Ephraim is joyn-*  
*ed to Idols, let him alone, Hos. 4. 17. Wo*  
*be to them when I depart from them. I will*  
*laugh at their Calamities, and will mock when*  
*their Fear cometh, Prov. 1. 24, 25, 26,*  
*27, 28.*

*Barren Fig-tree*, thou hast heretofore  
 been digged about and dunged, God's  
 Mattock hath heretofore been at thy  
 roots, Gospel-dung hath heretofore been  
 applied to thee; thou hast heretofore  
 been strove with, convinced, awakened,  
 made to taste and see, and crie, *O the*  
*Blessedness!* Thou hast heretofore been  
 met with under the Word; thy Heart  
 hath melted, thy Spirit hath fallen; thy  
 Soul hath trembled, and thou hast felt  
 something of the Power of the Gospel.  
 But thou hast sinned, thou hast pro-  
 voked the Eyes of his Glory, thy Ini-  
 quity is found to be hateful, and now  
 perhaps



## The Barren Fig-tree. 99

perhaps God hath left thee, given thee up, and lets thee alone.

Heretofore thou wast tender, thy Conscience startled at the temptation to Wickedness, for thou wert taken off from the pollutions of the World, through the knowledg of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 2. 20, 21, 22. but that very Mire that once thou wert turned from, now thou lapest up, with the Dog in the Proverb) again, and that very Mire that once thou seemest to lie washed from, that very Mire thou now art tumbling afresh. But to particularize, there are three Signs of a Man's being given over of God.

1. When he is let alone in Sinning, when the reins of his Lusts are loosed, and he given up to them. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledg, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, Rom. 1. 28, 29. Seest thou a Man that heretofore had the knowledg of God, and that had some awe of Majesty upon him; I say, seest thou such an one, sporting himself in his own Deceivings, Rom. 1. 30, 31. turning the Grace of our God

## 100 The Barren Fig-tree.

God into Lasciviousness, and walking after his own ungodly Lusts: his Judgment now of a long time lingereth not, *and his Damnation slumbereth not*, 2 Pet. 2. 13. Dost thou hear, barren Professor? It is astonishing to see, how those that once seemed *Sons of the Morning*, and were making Preparations for Eternal Life, now at last, for the rottenness of their Hearts, by the just Judgment of God, to be permitted, being past feeling, to give themselves over unto Lasciviousness, *to work all uncleanness with greediness*, Eph. 4. 18, 19. A great number of such were in the first Gospel-days; against whom Peter, and Jude, and John pronounceth the heavy Judgment of God. Peter and Jude couple them with the fallen Angels, 2 Pet. 2. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. and John forbids that Prayer be made for them, because that is happened unto them, that hath happened to the Angels that fell, Jude 5, 6, 7, 8. *Who for forsaking their first State, and for leaving their own Habitation, are reserved in Chains under everlasting Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day.* Barren Fig-tree, dost thou hear?

First, These are beyond all Mercy.

Secondly,

## The Barren Fig-tree. 101

*Secondly*, These are beyond all Promises.

*Thirdly*, These are beyond all hopes of Repentance.

*Fourthly*, These have no Intercessor, nor any more share in a Sacrifice for sin.

*Fifthly*, For these there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of Judgment.

*Sixthly*, Wherefore these are the true Fugitives and Vagabonds, that being left of God, of Christ, of Grace, and of the Promise, and being beyond all hope, wander and straggle to and fro, even as the Devil, their Associate, until their time shall come to die, or until they descend into Battel and perish.

2. Wherefore they are let alone in hearing. If these at any time come under the Word, there is for them *no* God, *no* favour of the means of Grace, *no* stirrings of Heart, *no* pity for themselves, *no* love to their own Salvation. Let them look on this hand or that, there they see such effects of the Word in others, as produceth Signs of Repentance, and Love to God and his Christ, *These men only have their backs bowed down alway*, Rom. 11. 10. These Men only have

have the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear to this very day, Eccl. 8. 10. Wherefore as they go to the place of the Holy; So they come from the place of the Holy, and soon are forgotten in the places where they so did. Only they reap this Damage, They treasure up Wrath against the day of Wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, Rom. 2. 3, 4, 5. Look to it, barren Professor.

3. If he be visited after the common way of Mankind, either with Sicknes, Distress, or any kind of Calamity, still no God appeareth, no sanctifying Hand of God, no special Mercy is mixed with the Affliction. But he falls sick, and grows well, like the Beast; or is under distress, as Saul, who when he was engaged by the Philistines, was forsaken and left of God, 1 Sam. 28. 4, 5, 6. And the Philistins gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched at Gilboa: And when Saul saw the Host of the Philistins, he was afraid, and his Heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him no more, neither by Dream, nor by Urim,

by Prophets. The Lord answered him no more, He had done with him, cast him off, and rejected him, and left him to stand and fall with his Sins by himself. But of this more in the Conclusion, therefore I here forbear.

4. These Men may go whither they will, do what they will; they may range from Opinion to Opinion, from Notion to Notion, from *Sect to Sect*, but are steadfast no where, they are left to their own Uncertainties: they have not Grace to establish their Hearts, and though some of them have boasted themselves of this *Liberty*, yet *Jude* calls them *wandering Stars*, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, *Jude* 13. They are left, as I told you before, to be Fugitives and Vagabonds in the Earth, to wander every where, but to abide no where, until they shall descend to their own place, (*Acts* 1. 5.) with *Cain* and *Judas*, Men of the same fate with themselves.

A Third Sign that such a Professor is quite past Grace, is, When his Heart is grown so hard, so stony and impenetrable, that nothing will pierce it. *Barren*

*Fig-*

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*Fig-tree, dost thou consider? A hard and impenitent Heart is the Curse of God. A Heart that cannot repent, is instead of all Plagues at once: And hence it is that God said of Pharaoh, Exod. 9. 14. when he spake of delivering him up in the greatness of his Anger, I will at this time, saith he, send all my Plagues upon thy Heart.*

To some Men that have grievously sinned under a Profession of the Gospel, God giveth this Token of his Displeasure, they are denied the Power of Repentance, their Heart is bound, they cannot repent: It is impossible that they should ever repent, should they live a thousand Years, *It is impossible for those Fall-a-ways to be renewed again unto Repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame, Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.* Now to have the Heart so hardened, so judicially hardened, this is as a bar put in by the Lord God against the Salvation of this Sinner. This was the burden of Spira's Complaint, *I cannot do it: O now I cannot do it.*

This Man sees what he hath done, what should help him, and what will become

some of him, yet he cannot repent; he  
 pulled away his Shoulder before, he  
 stopped his Ears before, he shut up his  
 eyes before, *and in that very posture* God  
 left him, and so he stands to this very  
 Day. I have had a fancy, that Lot's  
 Wife, when she was turned into a Pillar  
 of Salt, (*Gen. 19. 26.*) stood yet looking  
 over her Shoulder, or else with her Face  
 towards Sodom; as the Judgment caught  
 her, so it bound her, and left her a  
 Monument of God's Anger to after-  
 Generations.

We read of some that are *seared with  
 a hot Iron*, and that are *past feeling*, for  
 seared Persons, in seared Parts are.  
 Their Conscience is seared, 1 Tim. 4. 2.  
 The Conscience is the thing that must  
 be touched with feeling fear and remorse,  
 if ever any good be done with the Sin-  
 ner. How then can any good be done  
 to those whose Conscience is *worse than*  
*that, that is fast asleep in sin*, Eph. 4. 19. For  
 that Conscience that is fast asleep, may  
 yet be effectually awakened and saved;  
 but that Conscience *that is seared*, dried,  
 as it were, into a *Cinder*, can never have  
 sense, feeling, or the least regret in this  
 World. Barren Fig-tree, hearken, judi-  
 cial

*cial hardening is dreadful.* There is a difference betwixt that hardness of Heart that is incident to all Men, and that which comes upon some as a signal or special Judgment of God : and although all kind of hardness of Heart, in some sense may be called a Judgment, yet to be hardened with this *second* kind, is a Judgment peculiar only to them that perish ; an hardness that is sent as a punishment, *for the abuse of Light received, for a Reward of Apostacy.*

This *Judicial* hardness is discovered from that which is incident to all Men, in these Particulars :

1. It is an hardness that comes after some great Light received ; *Because of some great Sin committed against that Light and the Grace that gave it.* Such hardness as *Pharaoh* had, after the Lord had wrought wonderously before him : Such hardness as the *Gentiles* had, an hardness which darkened the Heart, an hardness which made their Minds *reprobate.* This hardness is also the same with that the *Hebrews* are cautioned to beware of, (*Heb. 3. 7. &c.*) an hardness that is caused by Unbelief, and departing from the Living God ; an hardness compleated thro the



the deceitfulness of Sin: Such as that  
the Provocation, of whom God sware,  
that they should not enter into his *Rest*.  
Twas this kind of *hardness* also that  
both *Eain*, *Ishmael*, and *Esau* were har-  
dened with, after they had committed  
their great *Transgressions*.

2. It is the *greatest* kind of *Hardness*,  
and hence they are said to be *Harder*  
than a *Rock*, Jer. 5. 3. or than an *Ada-*  
*mant*, Zec. 7. 13. that is, *harder than*  
*Flint*. So hard that nothing can enter.

3. It is an *Hardness* given in much  
anger, and that to bind the Soul up in  
an impossibility of Repentance.

4. It is an *Hardness* therefore which  
is incurable, of which a Man must die  
and be damned. *Barren Professor*, hear-  
ken to this.

A Fourth *Sign* that such a Professor is  
quite past Grace, is, when he fortifies his  
hard Heart against the *tenour* of God's  
Word, Job 9. 4. &c. This is called  
*hardning themselves against God*, and *turn-*  
*ing of the Spirit against him*. As thus,  
When after a Profession of Faith in the  
Lord Jesus, and of the Doctrin that is  
according to Godliness, they shall em-  
bolden

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bolden themselves in courses of Sin, by promising themselves that they shall have *Life and Salvation notwithstanding*. Barren Professor, hearken to this. This Man is called, (Deut. 29. 18.) *A Root that beareth Gall and Wormwood, or a poisonous Herb, such an one as is abominated of God; yea, the abhorred of his Soul. For this Man saith, v. 19. I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination or stubbornness of my Heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; an opinion flat against the whole Word of God, yea against the very Nature of God himself. Wherefore he adds, Deut 19. 20. Then the Anger of the Lord, and his Jealousie shall smoke against that Man; and all the Curses that are written in Gods Book shall lie upon him, and God shall blot out his Name from under Heaven.*

Yea, that Man shall not fail to be effectually destroyed, saith the Text, 21 vers. *The Lord shall separate that Man unto evil, out of all the Tribes of Israel, according to all the Curses of the Covenant.*

*He shall separate him unto Evil; He shall give him up, he shall leave him to his Heart; he shall separate him to that,*  
or

for those that will assuredly be too hard for him.

Now this Judgment is much effected, when God hath given a Man up unto Satan, and hath given Satan leave, without fail, to compleat his destruction: I say, When God hath given Satan leave effectually to compleat his destruction: For all that are delivered up unto Satan, have not, nor do not come to this end. But that is the Man, whom God shall separate to Evil, and shall leave in the Hands of Satan, to compleat, without fail, his Destruction.

Thus he served Ahab, a Man, that sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord 1 King. 21. 25. And the Lord said, Who shall perswade Ahab, that he may go up, and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner: And there came forth a Spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will perswade him, 1 King. 22. 20, 21, 22. And the Lord said unto him, Where-with? And he said, I will go forth, and be a lying Spirit in the mouth of all his Prophets. And he said, Thou shalt perswade him, and prevail also, go forth, and do so. Thou shalt perswade him, and prevail,

prevail, do thy Will, I leave him in thy Hand, Go forth, and do so.

Wherefore in these Judgments, the Lord doth much concern himself for the management thereof, because of the Provocation wherewith they have provoked him. This is the Man, whose Run contriveth, and bringeth to pass by his own contrivance. I will chuse their delusions for them; I will bring their fears upon them, Isa. 66. 4. I will chuse their Devices, or the Wickednesses that their Hearts are contriving of. I, even I, will cause them to be accepted of, and delight to them. But who are they that must thus be feared? Why, those among Professors, that have chosen their own ways, those whose Soul delighteth in their own abominations.

Because they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong Delusions, that they should believe a Lye, that they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in Unrighteousness.

God shall send them.] It is a great word. Yea, God shall send them strong Delusions, Delusions that shall do, that shall make them believe a Lie. Why so? That

they all might be damned, every one of them,  
who believe not the Truth, but had pleasure  
in Unrighteousness, 2 Thess. 5. 10, 11,  
for 12.

There is nothing more provoking to  
the Lord, than for a Man to promise,  
when God threatneth; for a Man to be  
light of conceit, that he shall be safe;  
and yet to be more wicked than in for-  
mer days: This Man's Soul abhorreth  
the Truth of God, no marvel therefore  
if God's Soul abhorreth him: he hath  
invented a way contrary to God, to  
bring about his own Salvation; no mar-  
vel, therefore, if God invent a way to  
bring about this Man's Damnation: And  
seeing that these Rebels are at this  
point, We shall have Peace; God will see  
whose Word shall stand, His or theirs.

A Fifth Sign of a Man being past Grace,  
is, When he shall at *this*, scoff, and in-  
wardly grin, and fret against the Lord,  
secretly purposing to continue his course  
and put all to the venture, despising the  
Messengers of the Lord *He that despi-*  
*sed Moses's Law, died without Mercy;* of  
*how much sorer Punishment suppose ye, shall*  
*be thought worthy, who hath troden*  
*under*

under foot the Son of God, &c. Heb. 10. 28.

Wherefore, against these Despisers God hath set himself, and foretold, that they shall not believe, but perish. Behold ye Despisers, and wonder, and perish for I work a work in your days, which ye shall in no wise believe, though a Man declare it unto you, Acts 13. 41.

*After that thou shalt cut it down.*

Thus far we have treated of the Barren Fig-tree, or fruitless Professor, with some Signs to know him by; whereto is added also some Signs of one who neither will or can, by any means, be fruitful, but they must miserably perish. Now being come to the time of Execution, I shall speak a word to that also, *After that thou shalt cut it down.*] Christ at last turnsthe Barren Fig-tree over to the Justice of God, shakes his Hands of him, And gives him up to the fire for his unprofitableness.

*Thou shalt cut it down.]*

Two things are here to be considered.

1. The Executioner, *Thou*, the great, the dreadful, the eternal God. These words therefore, as I have already said, signifie that Christ the Mediator, thro' whom alone Salvation comes, and by whom alone Execution hath been deferred, *Now giveth up the Soul*, forbears to speak one Syllable more for him, or to do the least Act of Grace further, to try for his Recovery; but delivereth him up to that fearful Dispensation, *To fall into the hand of the living God*, Heb. 10.

2. The *Second* to be considered, is, *The Instrument by which this Execution is done*, and that is *Death*; compared here to an *Ax*; and forasmuch as the Tree is not felled at one Blow, therefore the strokes are here continued, till all the blows be struck at it that are requisite for its felling; For now cutting-time, and cutting-work is come, cutting must be his Portion, till he be cut down. *After that*

F

thou

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*thou shalt cut it down.*] Death, I say, is the *Ax*, which God often useth, therewith to take the *Barren Fig-tree* out of the *Vineyard*, out of a *Profession*, and also out of the *World* at once. But this *Ax* is now new-ground, it cometh well-edged to the *Roots* of this *Barren Fig-tree*. It hath been whetted by *Sin*, by the *Law*, and by a *formal Profession*, and therefore must, and will make deep gashes, not only in the *natural life*, but in the *Heart* and *Conscience* also of this *Professor*. *The wages of Sin is Death, the sting of Death is Sin*, 1 Cor. 15. Wherefore *Death* comes not to this *Man* as he doth to *Saints*, muzzled, or without his *Sting*, but with open mouth, in all his strength yea, he sends his *First-born*, which is *Guilt*, to devour his strength, and to bring him to the *King of Terrors*, Job 18.13 14.

But to give you, in a few *Particulars*, the manner of this *Man's* dying.

1. Now he hath his fruitless *Fruits* be-  
leaguer him round his *Bed*, together with  
all the *Bands* and *Legions* of his other  
wickedness. *His own Iniquities* shall take  
the wicked himself, and he shall be holden  
in the *Cords* of his *Sins*, Prov. 5.22.

2. Now



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2. Now some terrible discovery of God is made out unto him, to the perplexing and terrifying of his guilty Conscience, *God shall cast upon him, and not spare; and he shall be afraid of that which is high*, Job 27. 22.

3. The dark Entry he is to go thro', will be a fore amazement to him; *For fear shall be in the way*, Eccl. 12. 5. yea, Terrors will take hold on him, when he shall see the yawning Jaws of Death to gape upon him, and the Doors of the Shadow of Death open to give him passage out of the World. Now who will meet me in this dark Entry; how shall I pass through this dark Entry into another World!

4. For by reason of Guilt, and a shaking Conscience, *His Life will hang in continual doubt before him, and he shall be afraid day and night*, Deut. 28. 66, 67. and shall have no assurance of his Life.

5. Now also *Want* will come up against him, he will come up like an armed Man. There is a terrible Army to him that is graceless in Heart, and fruitless in Life. This *Want* will continually cry in thine Ears, here is a New Birth wanting; a new Heart, and a new Spirit

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wanting ; here is Faith wanting ; here is Love and Repentance wanting ; here is the Fear of God wanting, and a good Conversation wanting ; *Thou art weighed in the Ballance, and art found wanting,* Dan. 5. 27.

6. Together with these, stand by the companions of Death, Death and Hell, Death and Devils, Death and endless Torment in the everlasting flames of devouring Fire. *When God shall come up unto the People, he will invade them with his Troops,* Hab. 3. 16.

But how will this Man die ? Can his Heart now endure, or can his Hands be strong ? *Ezek. 22. 14.*

1. God, and Christ, and Pity have left him : Sin against Light, against Mercy, and the Long-suffering of God is come up against him ; his Hope and Confidence now lie a dying by him, and his Conscience totters and shakes continually within him.

2. Death is at his work, *Cutting of him down*, hewing both Bark and Heart, both Body and Soul a-sunder ; The Man groans, but Death hears him not : He looks ghastly, carelessly, dejectedly ; he sighs, he sweats, he trembles, but Death matters nothing.

3. Fearful

3. Fearful *Cogitations* haunt him, misgivings, direful apprehensions of God terrifie him. Now he hath time to think what the loss of Heaven will be, and what the torments of Hell will be; now he looks no way but he is frightened.

4. Now would he live, but may not; he would live, though it were but the life of a Bed-ridden Man, but must not. He that cuts him down, sways him, as the Feller of Wood, *sways the tottering Tree*; now this way, then that, at last a Root breaks, an Heart-string, an Eye-string snaps a-sunder.

5. And now, could the Soul be *annihilated*, or brought to nothing, how happy would it count it self! but it sees that may not be. Wherefore it is put to a wonderful strait: stay in the Body it may not, go out of the Body it dares not. *Life* is going, the *Blood* settles in the *Flesh*, and the *Lungs* being no more able to draw Breath through the Nostrils, at last out goes the weary trembling Soul, who is immediately seized by Devils, who lay lurking in every hole in the Chamber for that very purpose: His Friends take care of the Body, wrap it up in the *Sheet* or *Coffin*; but the Soul is

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out of their thought and reach, going  
down to the Chambers of Death.

I had thought to have enlarged, but  
I forbear: God, who teaches Man to  
profit, bless this brief and plain Dis-  
course to thy Soul, who yet standest  
Professor in the Land of the Living  
among the Trees of his Garden. *Am.*

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*F I N I S.*